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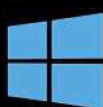
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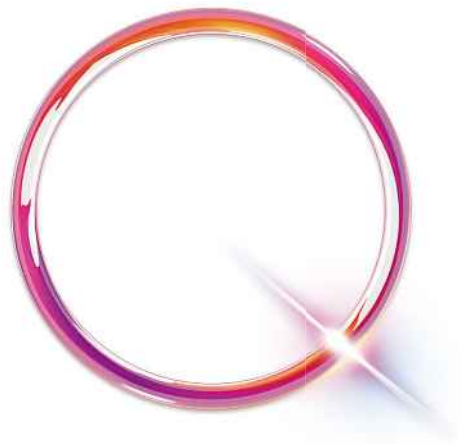
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From the Editor

If I printed and stacked all the emails we've received about Windows 10, they would reach to the moon. Or the top of Everest. Or maybe Canary Wharf. The exact height doesn't matter. What's important is that no subject this *decade* has generated more opinions, problems and tips from readers than Microsoft's wonderful/terrible (delete as applicable) operating system.

In recent issues we've focused on the controversies surrounding Windows 10, and provided tips for getting more from it. Now it's time for us to fix more of your problems. Our troubleshooting guide begins on page 50.

Personally, I think Windows 10 is very good. Better than 8? Undoubtedly. Better than XP?



Probably. Better even than the legendary Windows 7? On a good day, yes. But it still gives me problems, most of which come after updates. I know many of you also suffer from post-update glitches, so we'll have more advice on how to survive them soon. Please keep your problems and questions coming.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk



THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

19 million

Number of ransomware emails sent in two weeks
- p11



£20

Worth of free voucher that Tesco gave to a reader - p17

7,965 days

Time left until computer armageddon (possibly)
- p49

HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLS

We use snipcas to turn long URLs that are hard to type into ones that are short and simple. They aren't websites themselves, which means they won't be recognised if you type them into Google. Instead, you need to type them into your browser address bar, then press Enter. Doing this will take you to the correct website.

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Microsoft's latest operating system might be impressive but it isn't perfect. We provide solutions to some of your Windows 10 frustrations

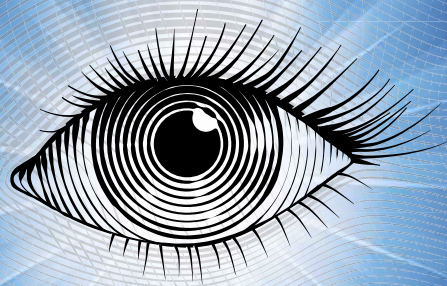
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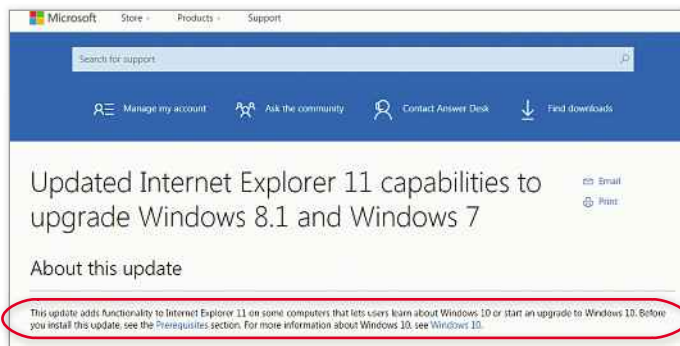
W10 upgrade: now Microsoft nags you in security update

Microsoft is trying to persuade people to upgrade to Windows 10 by placing messages inside security updates.

The company says that a recent security update to Internet Explorer (IE) adds “functionality” that lets people running Windows 7 and 8.1 begin an upgrade to Windows 10.

Microsoft admits this on one of its support pages for the update (www.snipca.com/20018, see screenshot). Called MS16-023, it was released on 8 March as part of Microsoft’s monthly ‘patch Tuesday’ update of security fixes. It also included fixes for vulnerabilities in IE that could leave a PC exposed to hackers by tricking its user into visiting an infected web page.

The update is being seen as Microsoft’s most controversial attempt yet to encourage people to switch to the new operating system. Windows expert Woody Leonhard of the



website InfoWorld described it as an “ad-generator” for Windows 10, and said it “crosses way over the line”.

He claims that the update places a blue banner across new tabs opened in Internet Explorer, displaying the message “Microsoft recommends upgrading to Windows 10”. However, it’s not known how often this appears, or how many computers are affected.

Adverts or being hacked – take your pick

What will particularly anger Windows users is that the

upgrade message, which has the **Microsoft Knowledge Base** number KB 3146449, can be removed only if you uninstall the entire MS16-023 update. You shouldn’t do this, because it will make you vulnerable to the dangers fixed by the update.

In essence the update gives users a stark choice: either put up with the adverts or uninstall the update and face the risk of attack.

The reason KB 3146449 can’t be removed is that it’s not listed as a separate update in Windows. To see what Microsoft has recently

COMMENT

Tactics like these can be traced back to April 2015 when Microsoft said that it wanted Windows 10 to be installed on one billion devices by 2018. It will only hit this target by relentlessly urging people to upgrade, and that means nudging them at every opportunity. If these messages annoy you, that’s partly the point. They need to be sufficiently irritating so that upgrading to Windows 10 – thereby banishing the messages – feels like a blessed relief. Microsoft has clearly been taking lessons in pester power from the most stubborn of toddlers.

installed on your computer click Start, type **update**, click Windows Update, then ‘View update history’ in the left-hand menu. If your updates aren’t listed chronologically, click the top-right Date Installed tab.

AT LAST - EDGE TO GET WEB EXTENSIONS

It looks like Microsoft is finally planning to add web extensions to Edge – over eight months after it launched as Windows 10’s default browser.

In mid-March the company briefly posted online a web page for Edge extensions, suggesting they may be coming soon. The page was quickly taken down, but survives in Google’s **cache** (www.snipca.com/20023).

There are three extensions shown on the page: Microsoft Translator, Mouse Gestures and an ‘enhancement’ tool for the online message-board Reddit. It’s the first time Microsoft has acknowledged the existence of Edge extensions.

Microsoft was heavily criticised for launching Edge before users could add

extensions to it. The company’s plan to introduce them by the end of 2015 was scuppered by technical problems, thought to be related to security concerns.

The first extensions are expected to appear in June in Windows 10’s first major update of 2016, codenamed Redstone.

• **Will Mozilla shut down Firefox?**

See page 13



You’ll like this...

The web version of Skype now lets you send YouTube videos (www.snipca.com/20034)



...but not this

Hackers targeted Flash, forcing Adobe to release a fix (www.snipca.com/20035)

Sell on eBay without paying *any* tax

eBay sellers can now earn up to £1,000 a year without declaring it to the taxman, following the introduction of new tax allowances in the Budget.

Chancellor George Osborne called the move a “tax break for the digital age” aimed at “micro-entrepreneurs”, although the allowances apply to all money earned on the side, whether online or not.

Previously some eBay sellers have been prosecuted for not paying tax on items sold. In 2014, John Woolfenden was sentenced to two years in prison for not declaring the money made on sales of over 500,000 items, mostly CDs and DVDs.

While the allowance covers selling on any site – or indeed through any outlet – it is being seen of particular benefit to occasional traders on eBay.

Osborne also introduced a



£1,000 tax allowance for people who rent homes on sites such as Airbnb (www.airbnb.co.uk). The Government said this reflects the growth of the so-called ‘sharing’ economy, in which members of the public lend items or offer their services to supplement their main income.

Half a million people would benefit from the allowances, Osborne claimed.

In addition, the Chancellor announced plans to close a

loophole that allows overseas companies to sell items on eBay and Amazon without paying VAT. He said that ending this “great unfairness” would help small UK businesses compete.

You can read the Budget speech on Gov.uk at www.snipca.com/20049.

✉ Will this new allowance make you more likely to sell items on eBay? Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

IN BRIEF

UNLOCK YOUR PC USING YOUR PHONE

Microsoft has released a phone app for Windows 10 that lets you unlock your computer without having to type a password. Called Phone Sign-in Beta, it connects to a computer via Bluetooth, then asks you to select a machine to unlock. It's only intended for “internal testing purposes” at the moment and, when launched fully, will only work on phones running Windows 10 Mobile. The app is available on the Windows Store at www.snipca.com/19991.

314GB HARD DRIVE FOR THE RASPBERRY PI

A new hard drive specially built for the Raspberry Pi 3 adds 314GB storage to the micro PC. Made by Western Digital, the WD PiDrive (pictured) is connected via USB, but uses less power than typical hard drives. It's available at the promotional price of £27.09 through Western Digital's website: www.snipca.com/20050.



Virgin customers rage as company closes Webpace

Virgin Media has angered hundreds of customers by closing its web-hosting service Webpace, and giving users less than two months' notice to transfer their data.

Webpace users have until 28 April to move to web-hosting company GoDaddy (<https://uk.godaddy.com>), which they can do using FTP – Virgin provides more details at www.snipca.com/20055. Anyone missing the deadline will lose their website.

The first year on GoDaddy will be free. After this the annual fee will be £59.88.

Virgin says it's closing Webpace because customers are using alternatives. It tried to pre-empt customer anger



by saying that GoDaddy's package makes it “even better” than Webpace, partly because it comes with 1GB of storage space, compared with Virgin's 200MB.

But many customers vented their fury on Virgin's forums (www.snipca.com/20054). One customer was worried by the customer service offered by GoDaddy, writing that after ringing the company for help, he was treated as if he had “just landed from Mars”.

The number of page

templates provided by GoDaddy also caused concern. One “extremely annoyed” user called GoDaddy's offering of five templates “useless”.

Two other Virgin services also close on 28 April – SmartCall and Media Cloud. The former lets customers make phone calls on their smartphone via Wi-Fi, using the minutes that come as part of their landline package. This has proved particularly useful for reducing costs when phoning the UK from abroad.

Media Cloud, which launched in 2014, is Virgin's online-storage service. The company suggests customers move their files to Dropbox.



Tomorrow's world

Can your ear canal be used as a password? Japanese company NEC thinks so. It is making earbuds that confirm the wearer's identity by playing a sound, then analysing how it resonates. The “acoustic characteristics” of the ear are unique to each person, and can therefore be used as an alternative to **biometric** methods such as fingerprint scanning. NEC explains more at www.snipca.com/19971.

IN BRIEF

WIKIPEDIA WILL READ ARTICLES TO YOU

Wikipedia is building speech technology that speaks articles, in order to make the online encyclopedia more accessible for the visually impaired. Researchers in Sweden will develop a "speech synthesis platform" first in English, Swedish and Arabic, before expanding it to work in 280 languages. They hope to have it ready by September 2017.

CLOSING APPS 'DOESN'T SAVE' IPHONE BATTERY

One of the most popular methods of saving iPhone battery has been debunked by Apple. For years it was thought that closing apps extended an iPhone's life between charges. But in an email to an iPhone user in the US, Apple's senior vice-president Craig Federighi confirmed that it doesn't. His email was leaked online to the website 9to5Mac: www.9to5mac.com/19987.

MPs pass Snoopers' Charter to give police new spying powers

The police may soon have more powers to hack into your phone, and check which websites you visit, following the passing of the Investigatory Powers Bill in Parliament.

Branded the Snoopers' Charter by its critics, the controversial bill was voted through the House of Commons by 281 votes to 15 after Labour and SNP MPs abstained.

It forces internet service providers to keep records of web activity for 12 months, allowing the police and public authorities – including HMRC – to access them.

The bill has faced fierce criticism from a wide range of groups, including newspapers, lawyers and civil-rights campaigners. They claim that the bill is so vaguely worded that it could easily be abused by authorities.

Opposition has come from across the ideological spectrum. *The Sun* said that the bill "draws too little



distinction between spooks working to prevent terrorism and ordinary cops known to abuse spying powers". *The Guardian* published a letter signed by 200 senior lawyers claiming the bill jeopardises the "fundamental right to privacy".

But despite such objections, only the Liberal Democrats voted against the bill.

Explaining Labour's decision to abstain – called "gutless" by the Lib Dems – shadow home secretary Andy Burnham, said the party would not "abdicate our

responsibility to the police, security services and, most importantly, the public".

Foreign secretary Philip Hammond said that not passing the bill would make the UK "less safe" from the "myriad of threats we face".

Home secretary Theresa May dismissed claims that the bill undermines privacy. She said that it "strictly limits" the public authorities that want to access internet data, and sets "high thresholds" for the "most intrusive powers".

The bill will now head to the House of Lords.

Use 'split-screen' Android apps on your phone and tablet

You'll be able to use two apps side by side on your phone and tablet in the next version of Android, Google has revealed.

The split-screen feature means that, for example, you'll be able to see a photo of a building and its location on a map, side by side (see image). You'll also be able to move information between apps.

Google isn't the first company to add this feature. Apple has already built it into its iPads, as has Samsung on



its Galaxy phones.

It will appear in Android N, the follow up to Android 6.0 (called Marshmallow). It's been made available in **beta** form to developers, so they can build apps for the full release, which is expected in the autumn.

Android N will also aim to save battery life by cutting power when the screen turns off.

Google names versions of Android after types of confectionary, a process that began with Android 1.5 (Cupcake). It's not yet known what 'N' will stand for in the forthcoming version, though rumours online have suggested 'nacho' and 'Nutella'.

• **Google's awful Android jargon** – page 12

The world's gone mad!

From sleepless nights to teenage mood swings, parents face many challenges when raising children. The latest threat to their sanity is Facebook. Eric Delcroix, a French expert on internet law, said recently that children may soon start suing their parents for posting on Facebook photos that violate their privacy. Under French law they could be jailed for one year, which is rather harsh for the 'crime' of uploading a photo of your six-year-old looking cute in a nativity play.

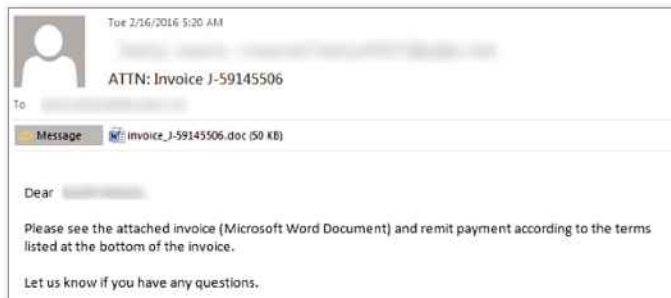
Worrying rise in ransomware driven by 'Locky' emails

A devastating new form of ransomware is contributing to a surge in junk emails, security experts have warned.

The ransomware, called 'Locky', infects a PC, then encrypts the data on it before demanding a payment of £885 to be paid in the virtual currency 'bitcoins'. All the files are locked with a 'locky' extension. If it attacks your PC, you won't be able to access your files, such as photos, unless you pay the ransom.

One of the reasons Locky has become so prevalent is that the hackers who developed it have changed the type of email attachment it hides in. It was initially smuggled inside an attached Microsoft Word document. Now it arrives as a **JavaScript** file, making it harder for your antivirus software to detect.

Locky is often attached to an email with a subject line related to an invoice (see



screenshot). Hackers hope the promise of receiving money, or the threat of having to pay some, will trick people into opening the attachment.

Several security companies have reported a rise in ransomware. Chicago-based Trustwave said that at peak times in recent weeks its servers have detected every hour 200,000 emails containing ransomware attachments. The company said this amount of spam was "extraordinary".

Another US company, Fortinet, said it blocked

almost 19 million ransomware emails in a two-week period spanning the end of February and the beginning of March.

The rise of Locky comes at a time when Britons are growing increasingly anxious about online crime. A survey from UK security company VestVPN shows that 88 per cent of Britons believe that cybercrime is as big a threat as 'real-world' crime. People worry most about losing money as the result of a hack, followed by the theft of personal data.

• **Scan Windows 10 for malware** – see page 35

TalkTalk scam spreads as conmen steal thousands

Police are hunting for conmen posing as TalkTalk staff as phone-scam attacks continue to sweep the country.

In March, a couple from Huddersfield lost almost £5,000 after fraudsters tricked them into thinking they were due £200 compensation.

TalkTalk customer Paul Hirst, aged 58, said he spent six hours talking to the scammers on the phone. They told him that there was "something wrong" with his broadband service, and that they needed to remove malware from his laptop.

Mr Hirst watched as they hacked into his computer, after which they promised to

pay him £200 for the inconvenience.

He gave them his bank-account details so they could make the payment, but when he checked his account later, he found that £4,720 had been stolen. In frustration, Mr Hirst smashed his laptop with a sledgehammer.

Mr Hirst said the scammers were "very, very clever". "They had my name, my number and the fact that I have a TalkTalk account," he added.

Police say that TalkTalk customers are being targeted across the UK. In the past few months they have received reports from people in Swindon, Glasgow,

Bournemouth, Lancaster, Rochester and Tiverton. TalkTalk has admitted that last October hackers stole personal details of 157,000 customers.

The company said it was "sorry" to hear about the attack on Mr Hirst, but added: "Unfortunately, the reality is that the scams would not have been possible without the customer providing confidential information to the scammers".

TalkTalk provides info on how to spot a scam phone call on its website: www.snipca.com/19984.



IN BRIEF

SKYPE CLOSES SMART-TV APP

Skype will end support for the TV version of its app on 1 June. Microsoft, which owns Skype, said that people prefer to use the video-chat service on phones and tablets, even when sitting in living rooms that have large-screen TVs. Once support ends, TV manufacturers will have to decide whether to include the app. You'll still be able to use it, but it will no longer receive updates.

OPERA BROWSER TO BLOCK ADVERTS

Opera has become the first major browser to include a built-in ad-blocker. As you browse the web, Opera will detect whether pages contain adverts that can be blocked. It asks you 'Would you like to block ads and surf the web faster?', giving you the options 'Block ads' and 'Not now'. Opera claims that browsing the web with its built-in blocker is 45 per cent faster than doing so in Chrome with Adblock Plus installed. Read more on Opera's blog: www.snipca.com/19972.

25,000 HOMES TO GET 330MBPS BROADBAND

BT says it will soon run more trials of its G.fast broadband service, which provides speeds of up to 330Mbps – more than 10 times the UK average. Over 25,000 homes in Gillingham, Kent and Cherry Hinton, Cambridgeshire, will receive the service. In 2015, G.fast was successfully tested in Gosforth, Swansea and Huntingdon. BT intends to make G.fast available to about 10 million homes nationwide by the end of 2020.

Named & Shamed

Jane Hoskyn puts the boot into tech villains, jargon-spouting companies and software stuffed with junk

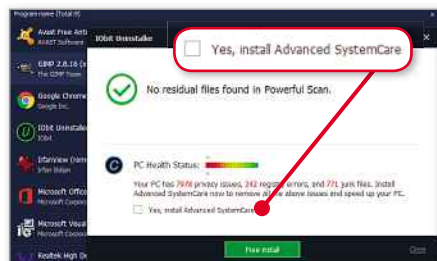
WARNING: Junk ahead

Junk offender: IObit

The theme of this issue's Named & Shamed is "I'm not angry, just disappointed". That phrase usually translates as "I'm as furious as a T-Rex whose tail is on fire", but in the case of IObit, I really do have mixed feelings.

IObit Uninstaller (www.snipca.com/19975) is one of the few free programs I go out of my way to keep on my PC. This is because, unlike the uninstaller built into your PC's Control Panel, IObit Uninstaller removes every last trace of unwanted software. It even lets you see, manage and obliterate any files left behind in your Registry.

Sadly – and ironically, given its raison d'être – IObit has become an aggressive 'junk-tout'. With one hand it taketh away Registry junk, and with the other hand it giveth loads of IObit-branded extras – more and more and more of them.



IObit Uninstaller now includes sneaky traps for downloading pointless IObit extras

Eager PUPs

IObit Uninstaller was among the few programs I installed on my new Windows 10 PC (my other must-haves are Chrome, VLC, IrfanView and Avast, in case you were wondering. Further down the page you'll see why this line-up is about to change). The first sign of trouble was an instant redirect from IObit to Cnet's dreaded Download.com [mirror site](#). So I knew to look out for PUPs in the installer

– but you'll need your magnifying glass to spot them. One IObit extra, Advanced SystemCare, is pre-ticked for installation before you even run the installer (we unticked it before taking the screenshot).

I made it through installation with no extras, and felt elated – until I launched IObit Uninstaller. The program window itself now boasts a plethora of PUPs and 'Upgrade to Pro' adverts. It even uses the Registry scan results box as an in-house billboard, full of cry-wolf warnings about your PC's health. IObit thinks my brand new PC is on its last legs and can be cured by – yep – more IObit software.

At the time of writing IObit had just released version 4 of its free security scanner, IObit Malware Fighter (www.snipca.com/19974). Again, the Free Download link takes you straight to Cnet, so take your time and use that magnifying glass when installing.

What are they talking about?

What they say
Android developer site (<http://developer.android.com>):

"Future releases of Android may deprecate additional implicit broadcasts, as well as unbound background services. For this reason, you should avoid or remove dependencies on manifest-declared receivers for implicit broadcasts, as well as on background services."

What they mean

Close apps running in the background for even better video in the next, nifty, 'N'-titled version of Android.



Jane's villain of the fortnight

Avast



To free, or not to free?
Avast is the question.

Go to www.avast.com and the answer seems clear. 'Avast. The antivirus you can trust. Available for everyone, for free.' The name 'Avast Antivirus Free' is a pretty solid clue, too.

Avast is a superb antivirus (AV), consistently beating other free AV products in tests. But it has a real nasty streak that I discovered a few weeks after installing it on my new PC. Initially it's all Doctor Jekyll, keeping you safe from nasties for free. After gaining your trust, it snaps into Mr Hyde, filling your screen with scary warnings that "your Avast is about to

expire" and you'll be unsafe unless you cough up £19.99 ("was £39.99").

That is absolutely untrue. Avast Antivirus Free does not expire, and it blocks malware constantly until you uninstall it. Avast's warning windows are a trick to get new and perhaps inexperienced users to buy other Avast products. Disappointed? I'm apoplectic. I'd happily pay for high-quality AV if it didn't constantly nag me, while trying to insult my intelligence and extort my cash. In fact, I think I'll switch to one right now.

✉ Want to nominate a villain of the fortnight?
Email us at editor@computeractive.co.uk

Question of the Fortnight

Is Mozilla about to shut down Firefox?

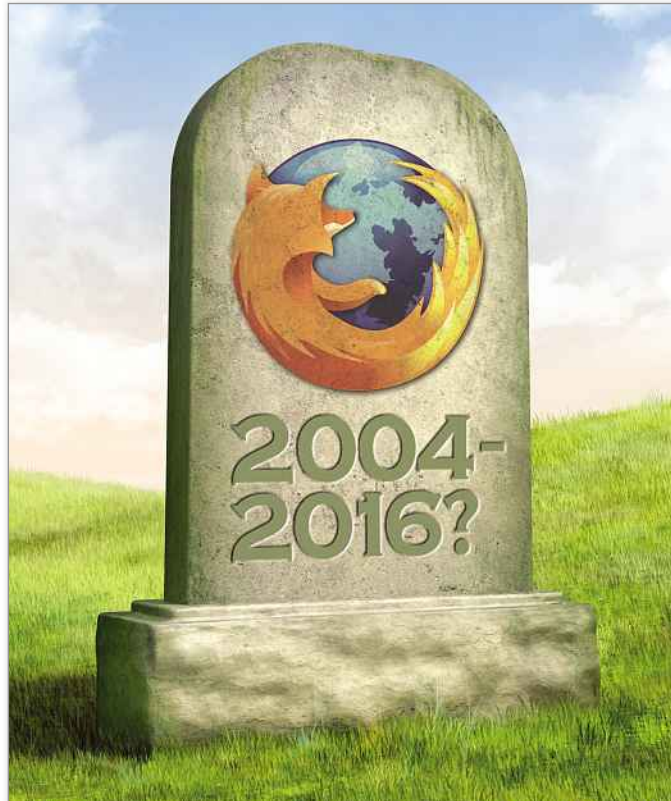
The much-loved browser might soon be replaced by one that's more 'performant'

Is Mozilla about to copy Microsoft, and launch a new browser? It now seems possible, following confirmation from a Mozilla developer that Firefox's new browser engine, called Servo, is being released in June.

It would be a significant development, because a browser engine is what all browsers – Firefox, Chrome, Internet Explorer and the rest – use to interpret the code of a web page, using this information to display it on screen. It determines a browser's speed and stability.

Mozilla has used the Gecko browser engine since Firefox's launch in 2004. But during the past few years its developers have been working on Servo. Any browser running on it will be more 'modular', which means you'll be able to choose which tools you want it to contain. This should make it faster and more secure. On its website (<https://servo.org>) Servo is described as a 'performant' browser engine, which is developer-speak for software, that performs well in every area.

But might it prove so performant that it grows into an *actual* browser, devouring the 12-year-old Firefox? Something similar happened with Microsoft's new browser Edge. What started as a small browser, codenamed Spartan because of its lack of features, quickly became a viable alternative to the slow, old-fashioned Internet Explorer (IE). Edge is now Microsoft's default browser in Windows 10, while IE is dying a slow, painful death.



“Mozilla may conclude that Firefox needs to be replaced by a browser that's 'new and improved'”

So the key question is: will Servo be absorbed by Firefox – meaning you'll carry on using the same browser – or will Mozilla feel Servo is different enough to be launched as a new browser? It's a decision that might come down to marketing. Mozilla may conclude that Firefox is a 'tired' brand, and needs to be replaced by a browser that's 'new and improved'.

Firefox use has certainly peaked. After hitting 30 per cent in 2010, Firefox looked like it would overtake a

declining IE to become the world's most popular browser. But then the popularity of Chrome rocketed, soaring past Firefox in 2012. Google's browser is now used by 55 per cent of people browsing the web, according to StatCounter (<http://gs.statcounter.com>).

Firefox did eventually leapfrog IE, but not until September 2015. Combined, IE and Firefox are now used by less than half the number of people who use Chrome. You can see why Mozilla might think that Firefox has

THE FACTS

- Mozilla is building a new browser engine – called Servo – for Firefox
- It's intended to make browsers faster and more stable
- Less than 15 per cent of people now use Firefox, compared with 55 per cent who use Chrome

had its day.

This is all intriguing speculation, of course. Mozilla has said nothing to suggest that Servo will replace Firefox. Indeed, it has been working on a revamped Firefox. It has big hopes for the new 'Activity Stream', which places History, Bookmarks, Downloads and Tabs under one heading. In February, Mozilla released a preview of how it will look: www.snipca.com/19653.

It has also been working on a new tool that makes it easier for developers to build better extensions for Firefox. Mozilla hopes this will persuade more users to use extensions – only 60 per cent currently do, according to recent estimates. Without this, Firefox will never gain ground on Chrome.

Whatever happens, Firefox fans shouldn't panic. The browser isn't going to vanish overnight. Instead, it's likely that Servo will become a testing ground for new Firefox features. But things can change quickly in the world of browsers. It took just weeks for Spartan to be seen as IE's replacement. We'll keep looking for similar signs that Servo may develop as quickly.

Letters

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Windows 8 better than 10? You must be joking

 Is Bill Munns for real? How can he say Windows 8 is better than 10 (Letters, Issue 471)? After the bliss of Windows 7, which I loved, Windows 8 almost drove me mad with rage. Nothing ever appeared to be in the same place twice. Things would open when I hadn't clicked them. Things I clicked wouldn't open. I was hoping Windows 10 would be better, and it is. I'm pleased that Mr Munns is happy with Windows 8. He obviously found something in it that I couldn't. But his enthusiasm won't persuade me to go back.

Andrew Cunningham

I still use XP on my shop's PC

 Your 'Are you an XP dinosaur?' debate in Issue 470 made very good reading, and I tended to agree with both sides of the argument. I'm writing this email from my home PC, which until recently ran Windows 7. Then I took the (free) plunge and installed Windows 10 and I am very happy with it. So where am I going with this, you might ask.

Well, Windows XP is what I use at work. I run my own business and use software that was designed for XP. The PC is on the shop counter and is not connected to the internet. It is old, but starts up every morning without a hitch. There are thousands of people with business software that only runs on XP. To upgrade to Windows 7 or 10 would mean a new PC, new business software (mine cost £1,800) and hours of work transferring data. So XP still has its place.

Evan Owen Jones

Sorry Windows 10 - I'm reinstalling 7

 After eight months of fighting a losing battle against Windows 10, I've had to admit defeat and reinstall Windows 7. The regular crashes, blue screens of death, random restarts and screen blackouts have left me and my eight-year-old Mesh Matrix PC battered, but not completely broken. I quite liked Windows 10, but it just didn't work for me.

My second computer is only six years old so it might cope a little better, but I use it as an entertainment centre through Windows Media Centre so until I change

that setup I won't be able to put Windows 10 on it. Maybe I'll have to go down the Smart-TV road with a **PVR** incorporating a DVD player. Then I'll have to find something to store my music on, while my bemused wife looks on pouring scorn on modern technology and wondering what I did with the old hi-fi.

Steve Phillips

My vision of the future: pay to use Windows 10

 I enjoyed Ken Rigsby's fantasy of the future (The Final Straw, Issue 471), and would like to share my own dystopian vision. It's not for the faint-hearted, so you have been warned.

I can see a time when Microsoft realises what a huge mistake it has made by giving away Windows 10 for free. Bill Gates may still be mega rich, but Microsoft is losing millions. The money it thought it would make from advertising within Windows 10 hasn't materialised because users are turning off the 'personalisation' settings. In desperation, Microsoft will eventually do what some of us fear:

start charging. You'll have to pay £10 a month just to access your desktop.

Could it happen? Don't discount it. If Microsoft hits its target of a billion users, and they are prepared to spend £120 a year – well, you do the maths! It won't happen this year, and probably not next year. But once the world has become hooked on Windows 10, Microsoft may wake up and smell the money.

John Barton

Using PCs fights dementia? Not convinced

 I'd like to think that using a computer every day prevents (or at least delays) dementia ('Question of the Fortnight', Issue 471), but I'm sceptical. This is a view that comes from my experience of family members who have suffered from this condition.

They were all into PCs, and enjoyed hobbies that kept them mentally active. In fact, it was through them that I got into computers (one of them bought me my subscription to *Computeractive*). But that was no defence against the ravages of time. Dementia came to them all, and no amount of emailing or playing Sudoku online could stop it. I guess that hereditary



Apple will never 'illegally invade another country'

 It was alarming and depressing to read the views of Frank Miles and Matthew Gidman in Issue 471 ('Apple should unblock terrorist's phone'). In particular, Mr Miles' naivety left me speechless. He said that he's "more suspicious" of tech companies than the FBI, and that they need a "reality check". I think it's Mr Miles who should be reminded of the brutal reality of oppressive regimes when they get too much power to control their citizens.

Apple will never illegally invade another country. It will never lock people up without trial. It will never overthrow democratically elected governments. I don't approve of



everything Apple does, but ultimately it is on the right side in the debate about where personal liberty ends and tyranny begins. Google and Microsoft share the same principles. But intelligence agencies consider privacy to be a luxury. That's not true, and never will be, no matter how severe the terrorism threat.

John Armstrong

factors will always trump an interest in technology.

George Buchan

✉ I think computing can help you stay mentally fit and well. When I retired my wife told ('ordered') me to get a hobby, so I wouldn't get under her feet. That hobby was computing. I lock myself away in the study, read *Computeractive* cover to cover, and try anything I like the look of. It gives me something to look forward to every day.

I'm now 79. Other people I know who retired at the same time as me seem to have gone backwards. One of the reasons I think is because they never got to grips with a stimulating hobby. It doesn't have to be computing, but I can't think of anything else that keeps you as challenged. There's always something new to learn.

Warren Howard

I don't watch live TV, so why should I pay licence fee?

✉ I'm one of the so-called 'freeloaders' who watched iPlayer shows without paying for the TV licence. I made this decision about a year ago when it slowly dawned on me that I never watch TV live anyway (there's hardly ever anything decent on). I don't mind paying some money for the privilege of catch-up TV, but I do resent being forced to cough up the full £145. About £50 would be fairer. It would reflect the fact that my viewing is restricted to on-demand shows, and doesn't include live broadcasts.

Once again it seems the BBC has manipulated the Government into keeping the antiquated licence fee. We need ministers with a stronger backbone to tell the Beeb that a one-price-for-all licence is ludicrously out of date in the age of the internet. It needs to be broken down so people can pick and choose what they want to watch, then pay accordingly.

Derek Marsh

✉ I'm not a big fan of this Government, but it has done the right thing in closing the iPlayer loophole (News, Issue 471). I've never understood why it existed in the first place. Is there really any difference in watching a TV show broadcast live, and watching it 24 hours later? You're still seeing the same content, so why should the former cost £145 a year, and the latter be free? I see it



STAR LETTER

I don't mind adverts in Windows 10, but how bad will they get?

✉ I agree with your comments in Issue 471 (News) about adverts in Windows 10, when you say that they are a price worth paying for a free operating system. When I first read about the adverts

appearing I feared the worst. I imagined hideous, vulgar adverts that would put me off using Windows 10. I thought it would mean Burger King shouting at me about its 'Whoppers', or Tesco telling me that 'every little helps'. I didn't want Windows to turn into Channel 5.

But the reality hasn't been so bad. I can live with an image of Tomb Raider (pictured). It looks quite attractive, in a sci-fi sort of way, though I'd rather Microsoft advertised *Doctor Who* box-sets. I can also live with 'suggested' apps based on my tastes. I've never had a problem with adverts tailored to my interests. I've discovered lots of new books on Amazon that way. So I'm cautiously optimistic that the apps Microsoft suggests to me will be ones I



like. I hope I'm not being too naive.

The big question is how bad will the adverts get? If they become like the desktop equivalent of American TV, with adverts and 'messages from our sponsors' every five minutes, then that would be awful. It would make Windows almost unusable, and I would dread turning on my PC. Also, how deep into Windows 10 will the adverts appear? I don't want my taskbar to be like a billboard at the bottom of my PC screen.

But I'm prepared to give Microsoft the benefit of the doubt at the moment. I trust that they know how to make sure the adverts don't get too persistent and intrusive.

Colin Aldridge



The Star Letter writer wins a *Computeractive* mug!

as no different to tax dodging. Yes, it was legal, but it was immoral. It was depriving the BBC of much-needed revenue. I bet some of the people moaning about BBC3 moving online were also those who took advantage of this loophole.

Meredith Stanley

Should Skype be forced to provide smart-TV app?

✉ I was dismayed to read that Skype will terminate support for smart TVs in June this year (see News, page 10). While most of us now use Skype on our smartphones, tablets and computers, there are still smart-TV users, and some of these will have great difficulty finding another device they can use. My mother, who is 89, gets great enjoyment from receiving Skype calls on her TV from friends and family. It is so simple to use. She just needs to switch the TV on, and when a Skype call comes in, she only has to press the OK

button. A video call on a large screen seems so much better than an ordinary phone call.

I can appreciate why the economics of maintaining this technology for a small customer base doesn't stack up, particularly when it is largely provided free and depends upon advertising revenue. However my mother would happily pay a reasonable subscription fee if this were made available. Given the increasing importance of digital communication, should large technology companies be forced to take on more public-service responsibilities? It is worth noting that the Royal Mail still has the Universal Service Obligation that ensures at least one delivery every Monday to Saturday to every address in the UK for an affordable price. In the modern world we need to ensure that vulnerable groups do not become isolated.

Paul Dockree

Consumeractive

Are you misleading your readers with 'six years' claim?

Q I don't wish to criticise, but sometimes I think your advice can be misleading when you say retailers have to repair or replace an item within six years. Nowhere does the Sale of Goods Act (SOGA) or the Consumer Rights Act (CRA) state how long products should last. What's your response?

Paul Naylor

A Paul's right to say that neither law states how long a product should last – but we've never claimed they do. Instead we've always stated how long they give you to make a claim for a product that's faulty, not fit for purpose or not of satisfactory quality: up to six years (five in Scotland).

Of course, this doesn't mean that all products will be expected to last that long. Some manufacturers may argue that their products have a much shorter lifespan. It's up to a small-claims court to agree. A judge may decide that a particular item can't reasonably be expected to last six years, or that the faults are actually caused by wear and tear, or accidental damage.

CASE CLOSED

Who should fix a free printer?

Q A deal I signed up to in June last year to buy £147 worth of toners from Inkjets & Toners/Bentham Ltd (www.makingitgreen.co.uk) included a free Brother HL-L2360DN printer. In January, I was asked to pre-order four more toners, which I did. But three didn't work and neither did the three replacements. The company told me the printer is faulty. They also said that they are not legally responsible because the printer was free. They said I need to contact Brother to get it repaired under warranty. Is this correct?

Mike Allport

A No it's not, because Mike's contract is with Inkjets & Toners/Bentham, not Brother. Crucially, the printer being free forms part of his contract. Commercial litigation lawyer Richard Howlett of Selachii LLP (www.selachii.co.uk) told us: "This printer forms part of the goods purchased by the customer and was used to entice him into the purchase. Therefore, the expected quality is that of new and perfect goods". This means the printer must be fit for purpose. If it's not, Mike will be entitled to a refund.

However, because he has owned the printer for more than six months, he



must prove that the fault is inherent, or was caused by the toners provided. In doing so, Mike would also prove that he hadn't caused the fault by damaging the printer. Mike's next step is to get the printer independently tested. He'll have to pay for this, but Inkjets & Toners/Bentham will have to refund him if the results are in Mike's favour. It would then have to offer him a free repair.

But hopefully Mike won't have to go this far. We've told Inkjets & Toners/Bentham that it is legally responsible. We'll let you know what the company says soon.

Incidentally, while the company was wrong to point Mike towards Brother's warranty, it's unlikely he would have had much luck with it anyway. This is because by using third-party cartridges, he would probably have invalidated the warranty.

CASE ONGOING

Is there any way I can contact Apple?

Q I find it so frustrating trying to get support from Apple. No one ever seems to answer the phone and I am disabled, so am unable to stand in a long queue in my nearest Apple store. You often suggest using Twitter, but that hasn't helped either – I can't see Apple on there. Is there any way of getting through to this elusive company?

Dan Shields

A Actually Dan's in luck. Apple has just launched an official support account on Twitter

(<https://twitter.com/AppleSupport>), where its customers can get help fixing problems. Apple says it will also post tips and advice. This is great news for Apple customers. Until now Apple has ignored social-media sites such as Twitter, possibly because it thinks it doesn't have enough control over how they work. Many industry experts saw this stance as arrogant and aloof.

Dan's right that we often advise people to contact companies' customer support on Twitter. In our experience, you sometimes get a quicker response through Twitter



than you do on the phone. Companies don't want to be seen to be ignoring their customers. Please let us know how well Apple's new Twitter account works for you.

CASE CLOSED



We stand up for your legal rights

✉ Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk

Write: Consumeractive, Computeractive, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

Please include both your phone number and address.

Unfortunately, we can't reply to all your letters.

Is Amazon's 'free returns' banner misleading?

Q I believe Amazon's 'free returns' banner (see screenshot right) is misleading. I bought some shoes, but one was a different size. The seller was based in China and the free returns offer didn't apply. What's your view?

Howard Angel

A Legally, the banner isn't misleading because it clearly states there are restrictions. But we share some of Howard's concern, because we believe that the prominence of the banner may confuse buyers.

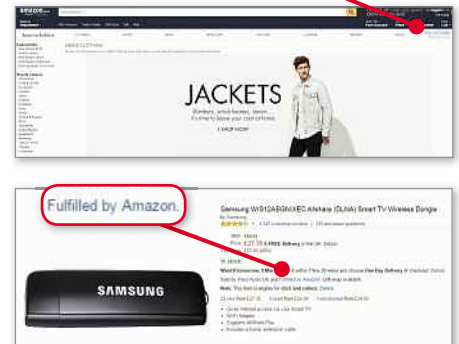
The important thing to remember is that free returns apply only to items that are sold by Amazon directly, or are sold by other companies and then 'fulfilled' (ie, delivered) by Amazon. The reason

Howard isn't entitled to a free return isn't because the seller is based in China, but because Amazon doesn't 'fulfil' the seller's items. To check, look for the 'Fulfilled by Amazon' blue link on a product page (see screenshot right).

However, Howard has since told us that the seller has refunded him, which is a relief, because legally there was nothing we could have done to help him.

Also, only some products – mostly clothes and shoes – are eligible for free returns (look for 'FREE Returns' next to the price). When you want to return an item, contact Amazon and it will email you a label to print and attach to the parcel. A courier will then collect it, at no cost to you. Follow Amazon's instructions at www.snipca.com/19931.

Lastly, Amazon's policy doesn't cover



items sold by Marketplace sellers, which are often individuals, not companies. Amazon explains how Marketplace returns work at www.snipca.com/19924. For more information on Amazon's returns policy visit www.snipca.com/19931.

CASE CLOSED

CASE UPDATE



Tesco gives reader a refund, an apology and £20

When we contact companies on behalf of readers, we're primarily looking for a refund. We



occasionally get apologies too, plus 'goodwill' vouchers to spend. Happily we got all three from Tesco, which was at fault in David Ellender's case (Issue 471).

David bought a Canon MG4250 printer from Tesco. The printer didn't work with Google Cloud, despite being described as Google Cloud compatible on the box. Tesco wrongly told David to contact Canon, thinking the manufacturer had to offer to repair or replace it. But Tesco was the retailer in this case, so it had full responsibility to provide a product that works as described.

We told Tesco that David's contract was with it, not Canon. It agreed, apologised to David, and gave him a £20 voucher to spend in its stores.

David thought he may have been misled by Canon or Tesco, but this wasn't so. The printer did fit this description when made, but became incompatible when Google changed its cloud-printing settings. The printer's packaging has now been changed so it no longer says it's cloud-ready, but if you bought the printer in the old packaging – after Google made the changes – you're entitled to a refund. However, we don't yet know when Google made these changes. We've asked the company for this all-important date.

For more information on Google Cloud Print visit: www.google.com/cloudprint. You can read a list of compatible printers at www.snipca.com/19754.

THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Cancel and close accounts

Amazon Prime

www.snipca.com/19906

Norton

www.snipca.com/19922

BT

www.snipca.com/19911

Plusnet

www.snipca.com/19918

Dropbox

www.snipca.com/19923

Sky

www.snipca.com/19914

eBay

www.snipca.com/19907

Spotify

www.snipca.com/19915

Facebook

www.snipca.com/19913

TalkTalk

www.snipca.com/19917

Google

www.snipca.com/19920

Three

www.snipca.com/19951

iTunes

www.snipca.com/19910

Virgin Media

www.snipca.com/19916

Kaspersky

www.snipca.com/19908

Vodafone

www.vodafone.co.uk/cancel-account

Netflix

www.snipca.com/19912



Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

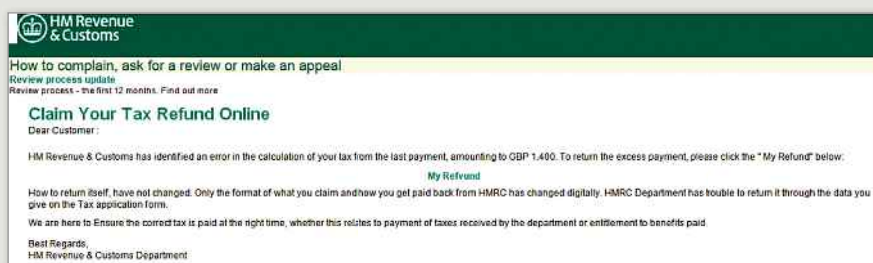
Emails seeking your 'Attention'

What happened?

Action Fraud revealed that the most common word in the subject line for scam emails in 2015 was 'Attention'. Other words and phrases used often by scammers included 'Your account has been revoked', 'Important Notification' and the seemingly innocent 'Hello'. They are all designed to suggest a sense of urgency that compels the recipient to open them.

The organisation, which is run by the City of London Police, also said that the three email addresses most commonly used to send scams were **Do-Not-reply@amazon.co.uk**, **bt.at home@ecomm.bt.com** and **PQ8MPY@m.apple.com**.

Action Fraud received on average 8,000 reports of **phishing** scams every month last year, a 21 per cent increase on 2014. Around 68 per cent of people reporting a



scam had been targeted by email, followed by phone calls (12.5 per cent), and text messages (8.9 per cent), with other forms of attack making up the rest.

What should you do?

The usual advice still applies: always be cautious when clicking links and opening attachments in emails. If they contain any of the phrases mentioned above, they are likely to be scams.

Sadly, phishing isn't going away. As

Action Fraud's Steve Proffitt says: "For the fraudsters, it is a low risk way of casting out their net and seeing what they can catch". But you can protect yourself by signing up to Action Fraud Alert (www.snipca.com/19937), which will send you information about scams in your area. Also, check the top 11 subjects with which scammers will try to con you: www.snipca.com/19938. These include a suspended credit-card account and a tax rebate from HMRC (see screenshot).

New tools

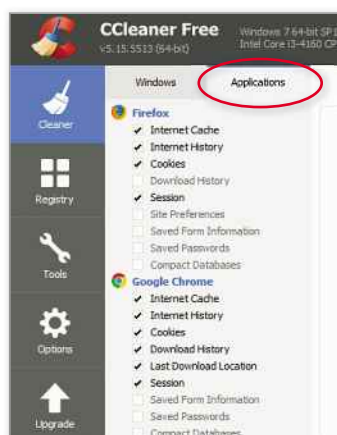
CCleaner 5.15

www.piriform.com/ccleaner/download

Most CCleaner updates add extra power to remove junk from Chrome, but version 5.15 is particularly impressive. It has improved how it removes three types of information that the browser keeps - your **cache**, your browsing history, and your 'session' (which includes your open and saved tabs).

Firefox, Chrome's big rival, is also targeted. The update goes after **cookies** in Mozilla's browser.

To clean both browsers, run CCleaner, click the top-left Cleaner button, then the Applications tab (see



screenshot). Now tick the options you want to clean, then click Run Cleaner (for more info on what to clean, visit www.snipca.com/19935).

If you've yet to install CCleaner, do so by clicking the link above then clicking the green Download button in the Free column.

If you already use it, make sure you're running the latest version by clicking 'Check for updates' at the bottom right of the program. You can see what else is new on CCleaner's Version History page: www.snipca.com/19934.

ScamWatch

READERS WARN READERS

Amazon £10 gift 'too good to be true'

I recently received an email that proved the old saying that if something sounds too good to be true, then it probably is. The email said it was from Amazon's 'member support' and said that I had been specially selected for the chance to win £10 for answering a quick survey. I suspected a scam straight away, and found the evidence online in Malwarebytes' blog: www.snipca.com/19879. Apparently clicking the link in the email led to a page that asked for your credit-card details and bank-account number.

Margaret O'Regan

Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk



3G/4G
hotspot



Beamforming
technology



Downloads &
multimedia hub

Synology Router RT1900ac



Manage and setup your Synology router with our DS router app available on Android or iOS devices.

Making your network smarter and faster

Designed for homes and offices, Synology Router RT1900ac broadcasts both 2.4 and 5GHz spectrums for combined data transfer speeds of up to 1900 Mbps. Fine tune traffic flow with advanced network tools like Application Layer QoS and Parental controls. Do more with fully fledged Synology software packages and get a revolutionary user experience with the Synology Router Manager (SRM).

Best Free Software

Brilliant new programs that won't cost you anything

PRIVACY

File Shredder Tool

www.snipca.com/19933

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8/8.1 or 10



Recycle Bin is an appropriate name for the place you dump unwanted documents and other PC files, because it's about as secure as chucking bank statements into a plastic box outside your front door. Anyone can see what you put there.

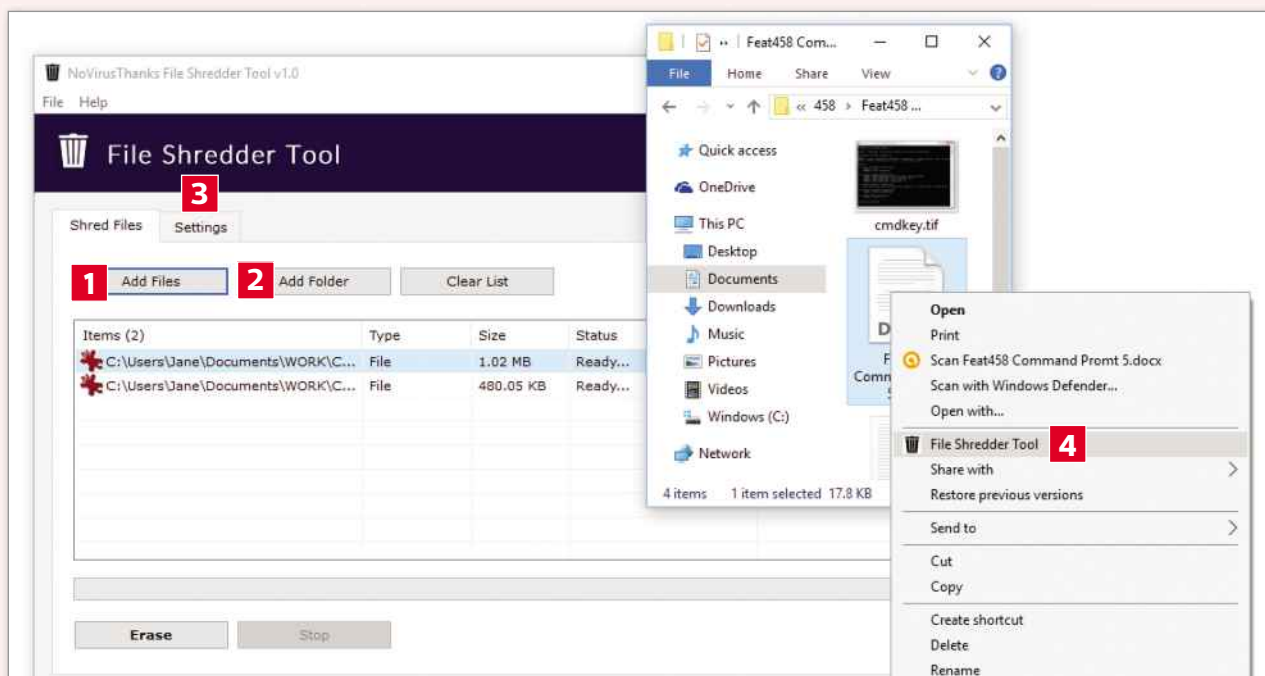
Even when the contents disappear into a dustcart, or into apparent digital oblivion by right-clicking and choosing 'Empty Recycle Bin', thieves can still access your paper or digital leftovers until they've been shredded, pulped and turned into egg boxes or unrecoverable data.

File Shredder Tool is a free new program from NoVirusThanks – maker of trusted security tools including SWF (Flash) File Blocker and Smart PC Locker – that completely and permanently obliterates your unwanted data. Once you use it to delete files, no-one can ever restore them using file-recovery software. Simply emptying your desktop's Recycle Bin doesn't offer this level of security.

The tool offers various blitzing methods. The simplest, a **single-pass overwrite**, is the quickest. More powerful methods such as three- and seven-pass overwrites take longer. The maximum 35-pass overwrite, known as the 'Gutmann', should take care of any internationally classified documents you've got hidden away, but the obliteration process could take hours.

For such a brutal-sounding tool, File Shredder is very easy to use. It integrates with your right-click menu (see screenshot below) so you can remove files without launching the program, or you can drag and drop files into the program window.

Click Free Download to get the installer. Windows 10 tried to warn us off running it, but the file is perfectly safe, so choose 'Run anyway'. Installation is very quick and there are no unwanted extras.



1 Click Add Files and choose files to obliterate from your PC. Alternatively, drag files on to the program window. Click Erase to start deleting the files completely.

2 Click Add Folder to add a whole folder of files to be blitzed in one go. You can add as many files as you want, as big as you want – but bigger files mean slower blitzing.

3 The Settings window lets you configure each removal by, for example, choosing an overwrite level. You can tick 'Shutdown when finished' when deleting huge files.

4 By default File Shredder integrates into Windows (File) Explorer's right-click menu, but you can switch this off in Settings if the menu is getting too cluttered.



SYSTEM TOOL

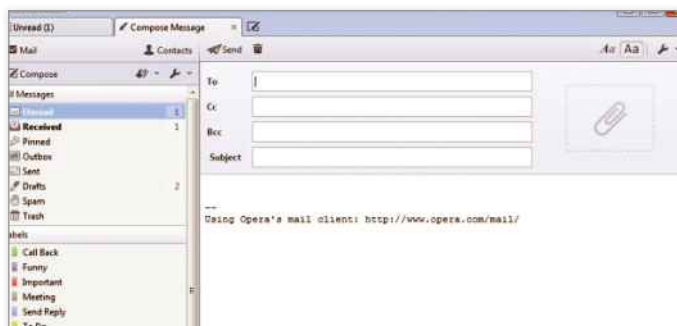
Explorer.Exe Restart 1.0

www.snipca.com/19885

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8.1 or 10

When a program, shortcut or Windows itself crashes, your first instinct may be to restart your computer. A quicker solution is to restart Windows Explorer. Explorer was renamed File Explorer for Windows 8/8.1 and 10, but its original name better reflects its purpose. It's not just a library for your personal files – it also governs file associations and works closely with the Start menu, taskbar and Control Panel.

Free new program Explorer.Exe Restart gives you a simple 'Restart Explorer.Exe' button to solve crashes and similar problems with one click. It comes in an installable version (click Free Download and run the setup wizard) and as a portable program for storing on a USB. Pin the icon to your taskbar for quick access.



EMAIL

Opera Mail 1.0

www.opera.com/mail

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8.1 or 10

The makers of Opera – the most widely used browser behind Internet Explorer/Edge, Chrome and Firefox – are determined not to be left behind, especially given Microsoft's extraordinary desperation to force Edge on Windows 10 users (see last issue's Best Free Software for a tool that blocks it). Opera's last new version (v35) is a fantastic browser that we featured on these pages in Issue 470, and now they've released Opera Mail, a lightweight desktop email client that uses Opera's tabbed design to let you manage multiple emails at once.

Click 'Download now' and run the installer. There's no rubbish to opt out of, but if you click Options you can untick unwanted shortcuts. You'll then need to configure a new email account or import existing accounts. For tips and guidance, see the Basics Tutorial page (www.snipca.com/19887).

WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

What should I use to burn photos to DVD?

Q We bought Nero Burning ROM a few years back, but lost it after upgrading to Windows 10. I downloaded it again from the Nero site (www.snipca.com/19888) and entered my licence number, but it wouldn't accept it. Is there a free or reasonably priced alternative I can use instead? I mainly just used it to burn backups for photos. Thanks.

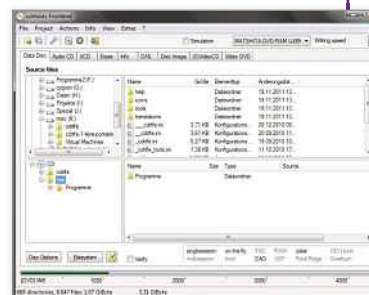
Helen Young

A Sadly, most of the best-known free Nero alternatives have been discontinued. ImgBurn, LiquidCD and PowerLaser Express have all gone. Is this a dying industry? No, but the names of its programs have got a lot less catchy. 'Cdrtools' (see screenshot) is a brand new, open-source tool that does exactly what you're after, for free. As well as letting you burn photos (assuming your PC has a DVD burner), the tool also lets you create data discs (for photo files, for example), audio CDs and video DVDs.

In keeping with the tool's arcane name (actually short for CDRTools), the Download page (www.snipca.com/19890) isn't clear about which of its many links you should choose. Instead, we recommend using the tool's SourceForge page (www.snipca.com/19890). Installation is quick, and there is no adware to opt out of.

Word to the wise: there are lots of free media programs around, and many have more attractive names than 'Cdrtools'. But free media software is a minefield of adware, as we discussed in Named & Shamed (Issue 470). Be careful when installing. Run an adware-cleaning tool such as AdwCleaner (www.snipca.com/19892) to regularly to check for PUPs.

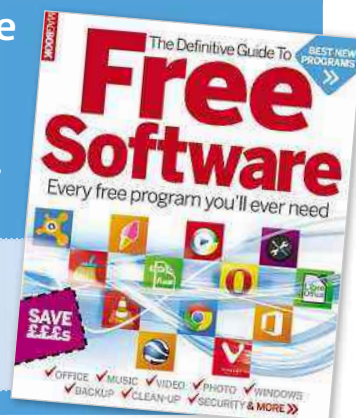
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Reviews

New products tested by our experts

PC | £650 from PC Specialist www.snipca.com/20020

PC Specialist Iris V650

A Windows 10 PC for video editing and more



There are cheap PCs and expensive PCs, and that's fine. Pro users with fancy work to do can buy fancy PCs to do it, while the rest of us manage with cheaper systems that are perfectly adequate for our everyday tasks, and save our money for real luxuries, like printer ink.

But this sensible arrangement breaks down when normal people need to do demanding things, such as video editing. Now that even phones shoot Full HD, most of us record more than we'll ever have time to watch, so it's great that affordable software lets us trim clips and put the best bits together.

“A great general-purpose PC with enough power and storage space for all your video-editing projects”

Try this on a budget PC, though, and even if it seems to work at first, you'll run into problems when you start applying colour adjustments, transitions, titles and effects. Without enough computing clout to generate the results while you watch, your preview window will slow down to a stutter until you press the button to **pre-render** everything. Having waited a few minutes for that, you'll change something and have to render it again.

And it isn't getting any easier: if your camera offers 4K, four times the resolution of Full HD, even a fairly decent PC will struggle to edit it smoothly. The solution is more processing power. Enter the PC Specialist Iris V650, a PC made with video production in mind. Its **quad-core** 3.3GHz i5 processor is from the top half of Intel's latest Skylake range.

To help out with rendering, there's also an Nvidia GeForce GTX 960 **graphics card**

with 2GB of its own memory. You might associate this with games, but better video-editing software can also put it to good use – although you'll need to check that this particular card is supported by your chosen program.

PC Specialist is selling this model specifically for video editing, but perhaps it should have spent less on the graphics card and more on the main processor. Intel's higher i7 processors support 'hyper-threading', which lets four cores do eight things at once. Many video-editing programs can take advantage when rendering and transcoding (converting or exporting video files).

Ideally it would have more memory, too: in our tests, multi-tasking performance was hampered by the 8GB supplied, so you might want to take advantage of the desktop tower case to install an extra **RAM** module in the spare slot on the motherboard.

For the price, though, the Iris V650 performed very respectably in our video-editing and conversion tests, quickly getting our holiday montage ready for YouTube. Its fans weren't too loud, which is important when you're trying to tweak your soundtrack. And if you do like to play games as well, the GTX 960 will run them all.

We approve of the 2TB hard drive, which provides plenty of space for your footage and finished productions, with some **flash memory** added for speed. A DVD-burning drive is built in, although

SPECIFICATIONS

3.3GHz Intel Core i5-6600 processor • 8GB memory • Nvidia GeForce GTX 960 graphics card with 2GB video memory • 2TB hybrid drive • 1TB 7,200rpm hard drive • 4x USB 3.0 • 2x USB 2.0 • Gigabit Ethernet • Windows 10 Home • 477x190x450mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/20020



there's no slot for **SD cards**. You could add a USB adapter or install a card reader in one of the many spare front drive bays. The blue-striped case is neither the prettiest nor the most compact, but more importantly it has plenty of fast **USB 3.0** ports.

This Iris V650 doesn't vary much from the components we'd expect in a general-purpose PC at this price, so it may be of interest even if video isn't your thing. If it is, it may fit the bill, with the caveat that serious 4K editors should think about spending more.

VERDICT: As long as you don't need a small PC, this is a decent all-rounder with good features that won't disappoint in any area



ALTERNATIVE: Mesh Elite Essential Skylake CA £499 It has slower processors, but this is an excellent option if you want to edit video but can't stretch to £650. Comes with a 2TB hard drive



LAPTOP | £1,096 from Dell www.snipca.com/19903

Dell Chromebook 13 7310

A pricey Chromebook misses the point

A thousand pounds? For a Chromebook? Google's simplified web-based operating system, Chrome OS, is supposed to make laptops cheaper than those with Windows 10, not more expensive. To be fair, Dell's Chromebook 13 range starts at a much lower price than the top model we tested: shop around and you can find the basic version for as little as £412 (BT's online store: www.snipca.com/19900). But that's still a lot more than the £200-£250 you'd pay for the average Chromebook.

“It's not a bad Chromebook, but we can't recommend it at this price”

So the Chromebook 13 needed to convince us it was more than average. Google's slightly smaller Chromebook Pixel did that with superb engineering and an ultra-sharp screen (see our review in Issue 455). Dell's machine doesn't make quite such a striking first impression. The carbon fibre lid is hard to tell at a glance from fake textured equivalents. The lower chassis is carved from magnesium alloy, similar to aluminium, but lacks the minimalist styling that marks out the likes of the Pixel. That's partly because Dell has included full-size USB ports, an **HDMI** monitor output and a **microSD** card slot, rather than just a **USB Type-C** socket that



needs adapters for everything.

In use, the tile-style backlit keyboard works well and the glossy touchpad responds flawlessly to scrolling and swiping. The Intel i5 processor and 8GB of memory in this model were overkill for Chrome OS, and everything ran very smoothly. Even the Celeron chip in the cheapest configuration would match something like Acer's Chromebook R11. With a battery that easily lasts a full day (we got 10.5 hours of video playback), the Chromebook 13 is a pleasure to work on. As with any Chromebook, you'll only be able to use it properly when you're connected to the internet over Wi-Fi, but you can store Chrome-compatible apps and files on the built-in 32GB **SSD**.

The screen may lack the Pixel's 'high **DPI**' resolution, but with Full HD resolution packed into 13.3 inches it still looks crisp. The widescreen format isn't quite as conducive to work as the Pixel's squarer iPad-style shape. Ours was a touchscreen, but you can shave a few pounds off the price by sacrificing this feature. We were satisfied with the vivid colour reproduction, covering 90 per cent of the **sRGB** range, but thanks to limited brightness and contrast it didn't look so great under bright light.

It's not a bad Chromebook, but we can't recommend it at this price. Only consider buying it if it becomes much cheaper.

SPECIFICATIONS

2.3GHz Intel Core i5-5300U dual-core processor
• 8GB memory • 32GB flash storage • 13.3in 1920x1080-pixel screen • Webcam • microSD card slot • 2x USB 2.0 ports • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Chrome OS
• 18.4x323x226mm (HxWxD) • 1.62kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19902



HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, which owns a hi-tech facility for testing the latest technology. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

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PRICES

Our reviews contain a link to the best price we found online at the time of press.

VERDICT: This is an expensive version of a laptop that has many limitations. It's not worth four figures.



ALTERNATIVE: Toshiba Chromebook 2 **£250** Its case is plastic and performance is only adequate, but the Full HD version has a comparable screen and costs far less



Reviews

LAPTOP | £649 from HP www.snipca.com/19926

HP Envy 13

Should you covet this Windows 10 laptop?

One of the best YouTube videos about computers – as well as one of the simplest demonstrations of Newtonian physics – is the one that shows an astronaut ejecting a floppy disk under zero gravity (www.snipca.com/19928). If, like us, you're old enough to remember floppy disks, you'll know they popped straight out, with a brisk spring action. So, just as Sir Isaac would have predicted, the 3.5in packet emerges and floats elegantly across the room, like something out of *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

“The Envy 13 is very easy to carry, but ran programs slower than comparable laptops”

To computer aficionados, though, there's a secondary meaning to the clip. The machine being used is Apple's first attempt at a laptop, the Macintosh Portable. It looked a bit like a modern laptop, except that its wedge shape continued back behind the keyboard and screen to form a unit the size and weight of three house bricks. So the joke is that sending it into space was the only way to make it light enough to pick up.

By the mid-1990s, laptops had evolved into a 15in 'clamshell' design that was just about practical to lug to work, and that's how they stayed for quite a while. It's only in the past few years that the standard size has crept down to 13 inches,



helped by sharper screens, fitting more detail into less area, and adjustments to Windows to make better use of small displays.

HP's new Envy 13 is a good example. The version we tested came with a top-end Intel Core i7 processor – equivalent to tens of thousands of the chips in that ancient Macintosh Portable. Oddly, HP isn't actually selling this configuration: you can get the Envy 13-d003na, which is similar, but with an ultra-high-resolution 3200x1800-pixel display, for £729 (www.snipca.com/19927), or the Full HD Envy 13-d008na with an i5 processor for £649 (www.snipca.com/19926). In practice, either model should suit most people.

However, the i7-powered laptop we tested didn't run programs quite as quickly as some comparable laptops. With just Intel's integrated HD Graphics 520, 3D games will only run at lower resolution and quality settings.

We found the standard 1920x1080-pixel screen had good brightness and contrast, but wasn't ideal for colour-sensitive work, covering only 84 per cent of the sRGB range with middling accuracy. For general work and leisure purposes, it was fine. Its battery lasted

less than six-and-a-half hours of video playback, and we'd expect less with the £729 model because of its sharper display. This compares poorly with the Asus ZenBook UX303UA, which gave us nearly 10 hours. HP claims the Envy 13 will manage that on lighter tasks.

At 1.27kg, though, the Envy 13 is very easy to carry, and it looks stylish. Despite being extremely slim, it manages to fit in three fast USB 3.0 ports, a full-size SD memory card reader and an HDMI port for a monitor, yet still looks uncluttered. That slimness does have one unfortunate consequence, though: the case flexes noticeably when you press on the keyboard, which also suffers from very short travel. So we didn't find it enjoyable to type on, and the touchpad didn't always work precisely either.

The same surface houses a fingerprint reader, for extra security, and a pair of speakers which seem to have gained nothing from the audio experts at Bang & Olufsen except the logo.

VERDICT: This attractive mid-range laptop isn't quite so impressive on closer inspection, but it's not bad value

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Asus ZenBook UX303UA £800 This slightly pricier laptop feels more solidly built, has an excellent screen and lasts longer between charges



SPECIFICATIONS

Intel i5-6200U dual-core processor • 8GB memory • 256GB flash storage • 13.3in 1920x1280-pixel screen • Webcam • Fingerprint reader • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • 3x USB 3.0 ports • SD card reader • Windows 10 • 12.9x326x226mm (HxWxD) • 1.27kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19930

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Reviews

LAPTOP-TABLET HYBRID | £359 from HP www.snipca.com/19944

HP Envy 8 Note 5001na

Don't laugh and point, it's rude

There's a fundamental conundrum with laptops. To make them more compact, you reduce the size of the screen. That reduces the size of the keyboard. The trouble is, our eyes can get used to seeing more or less information on a screen, but our fingers trip up when the keys get closer together.

For years, manufacturers have accepted that they can't square this circle. Now HP has made a breakthrough. It's based on one simple yet brilliant insight.

“It looks exactly as if you've chopped the keyboard off a laptop”

Picture the boardroom of a computer manufacturer. It's the annual product management meeting. Like every year, the agenda ticks on to the screen size dilemma. At the far end of the table, a junior designer coughs nervously. 'What if...,' he stumbles. But he knows this is his time. He's going to go for it.



'What if the screen and keyboard... weren't the same size?' All eyes turn to him, burning into his reddening face. 'What if we made a small screen...' Brows furrow in anticipation. 'And... a big keyboard?' There's a moment of silence. His career hangs in the balance. Then: applause.

And so we get the Envy 8 Note, which is either mould-breakingly innovative or side-splittingly ridiculous, depending on whether you've actually seen it. Instead of closing like a book, the touchscreen part, the size of an iPad mini, is stowed on the back of the keyboard part, the size of an 11in laptop. A grey felt cover protects the screen. A basic stylus is also included. None of these parts in any way appear to go together.

In use, it looks exactly as if you've chopped the keyboard off an old laptop and propped a tablet on it. You can't adjust the angle and the screen is liable to fall off. There's no monitor output for a second screen, projector or TV. With a slow Intel Atom processor and only 2GB of memory, the Envy 8 Note struggles to run Windows 10.

To save battery power, the Full HD display stays dim unless the tablet is connected



to its mains adapter, and even then its colour and contrast are poor. The battery only lasted four-and-a-half hours of video playback anyway. The keyboard has to be charged separately, and the crowning glory of the whole ill-advised conglomeration is that the keys are still cramped and the touchpad is too small.

SPECIFICATIONS

1.44GHz Intel Atom X5-Z8300 quad-core processor • 2GB memory • 32GB flash storage • 8in 1920x1080-pixel touchscreen • 5-megapixel rear camera • 2-megapixel front camera • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • 3G/4G SIM card slot • Windows 10 • 19.8x264x173mm (HxWxD) • 1.18kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/17924

VERDICT: It's great that HP set out to solve a problem, but all it's managed to do is build some new ones into an underpowered tablet

★☆☆☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: HP Pavilion x2 £250 If your budget won't stretch to a hybrid like Microsoft's Surface 3 (£529 with keyboard), HP's 10in detachable laptop is a more cheaper option



WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

Which budget laptop should I buy?

Q I would like a Windows 10 laptop to use when I'm not at home with my desktop PC, but I can't spend more than £300. Is it possible to get a good machine for that, or would I be wasting my money?

Andrew Smith

A A wise question. The little HP Stream 11 (£179 from Tesco www.snipca.com/19959) is fine for basic tasks and video chat, while the 14in Toshiba C40-C (£200

from Toshiba www.snipca.com/17851, pictured)

is a better size for typing. There are some good, cheap laptop-tablet hybrids too, such as the 10.1in HP Pavilion x2 (£200 from Argos www.snipca.com/19963). All of these are up to basic tasks such as email and web browsing, but more power-hungry tasks like photo editing would get frustrating.

Asus' X555LA (£319 from Tesco www.snipca.com/19960) edges over your



budget, but is more like a full-blown PC, with a 15.6in screen, 1TB hard drive and capable Intel i3 processor. Otherwise, your best bet might be a Chromebook, which omits Windows and relies on web apps to eke more speed out of basic processors. Toshiba's Chromebook 2 (£200 from John Lewis www.snipca.com/19962) is great.

✉ Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

SMARTPHONE | £160 from Microsoft Store
www.snipca.com/19941

Microsoft Lumia 650

The cheapest Windows 10 phone –
but also the worst

Regular readers will know we're rather sceptical about the mobile version of Windows 10. Running the same software on phones, tablets and PCs is a great idea in theory, with apps adapting to the screen size and processing power of each, much like web pages do. In practice, though, it doesn't really feel the same. Hardly any apps except Microsoft's properly support the idea, and there are far fewer available than for Google's Android or Apple's iOS.

Even so, there's no denying Windows 10 is very powerful, and the Lumia 650 brings it to you at a budget price. So is it the Windows 10 phone to tempt you away from the competition?

No, it's not. Microsoft had a real chance here to offer a bargain and get Windows 10's foot in the door of a bigger market, but it's blown it. The problem is the Lumia 650's processor – the Snapdragon 212. It's much slower than the Snapdragon processors in the pricier 950 and 950XL phones. In an Android phone, that would be a problem. With the more ambitious Windows 10, it's a disaster.

Even the Lumia 950 struggled to run smoothly in our tests. The 650 was downright embarrassing. One thing it *could* do was load most web pages without a long wait, something Android is notoriously bad at. Everything else stuttered and stopped. Loading apps and tapping through menus took ages. Even fairly simple games ground to a halt.

The Lumia 650 omits the more expensive phones' support for Microsoft's Display Dock and Continuum features, which let you use your phone with a monitor like a PC. We can see the sense in that, but it means it isn't really a full Windows 10 phone.

That's frustrating, because the Lumia 650 is well made, has a great screen, and played our videos for more than 11-and-a-half hours on a single battery charge. Pictures from the 8-megapixel are clearer than average. In some ways this is a good phone. But it just doesn't work.

SPECIFICATIONS

5in 1280x720-pixel screen • 16GB flash storage • 8-megapixel rear camera • 5-megapixel front camera • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • 3G/4G • microSD card slot • Windows 10 Mobile • 141x71x6.9mm (HxWxD) • 122g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19942

VERDICT: With all three of Microsoft's Lumias proving underwhelming, and nobody else making them, the future of Windows 10 phones is in doubt



ALTERNATIVE: Samsung Galaxy A3 £150 Its colourful screen is a bit smaller, but this Android phone is a much better choice for the money



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Reviews

PC MONITOR | £130 from www.snipca.com/19950

Iiyama ProLite XB2481HS-B1

A smaller, taller PC monitor

What most people seem to be looking for in a monitor these days – and what, therefore, monitor companies are most likely to try to sell you – is a huge widescreen display, typically 27 inches across the diagonal, with an ultra-slim bezel, a basic stand, and some fashionable features like high refresh rates to make games look smoother. But that's not quite what some of us want. That size may be too big for a small study at home, and how comfortable the screen is to use depends less on whether it can update more than 60 times a second, and more on whether you can set it at exactly the right angle and height.

“Black text looked exceptionally crisp, and images benefited from one of the widest ranges of contrast you'll find on any monitor”

In that case, Iiyama's ProLite XB2481HS-B1 could fit the bill. It's aimed at office use, but with Full HD (1920x1080-pixel) resolution and colour reproduction that covers a reasonable 94 per cent of the sRGB range, it could also work well for amateur photographers, video editing and watching TV. The display itself is just under 24 inches, which still feels quite spacious when it's right in front of you on a desk.

Most importantly, this model has a new stand design with a very tall yet sturdy arm at the back that lets you raise the screen up to 215mm (eight-and-a-half inches), as well as providing a good range of tilt. You can keep it low, push it back and angle it up towards your face, or bring it up nearly

to eye level and look straight at it, depending on what feels right for you. If difficulties with your eyesight or posture make using a computer feel awkward, or if you're just trying to avoid problems by varying your sitting position regularly, this could be a big help. It also pivots to a vertical (portrait) format for editing documents.

The LCD panel is of the VA type, which may not update fast enough for keen gamers, but allows black pixels to stay almost completely black, improving contrast. We weren't disappointed with the results: black text looked exceptionally crisp, and images benefited from one of the widest ranges of contrast

you'll find on any monitor. It also stays clearly visible from a wide angle. More expensive 'high DPI' screens offer a sharper image, and some displays do give more accurate colour, but for its price bracket this is a very good all-round performer.

What it doesn't have is any frills. There's just one input of each type – DVI for most PCs, HDMI for other devices and VGA for antiques – and no USB hub, so you'll have to trail your keyboard and mouse cables to your PC, and plug drives into it directly. You do get a pair of small speakers built in, though. And for a plastic monitor the ProLite



XB2481HS-B1 looks attractive, with just half an inch of plain bezel. The menu buttons for display options are on the back, which makes them fiddly but discreet.

For reasons best known to the retail industry, discounts on monitors tend to vary from week to week, so the price we found (£130) may have gone up or down a bit by the time you read this. But if you shop around you should always be able to find the ProLite XB2481HS-B1 for about £150 or less. If you're looking for a screen that has adequate resolution, great image quality and plenty of adjustment, that's a deal we can recommend.

SPECIFICATIONS

23.6in VA LCD • 1920x1080-pixel resolution • 1x HDMI port • 1x DVI port • 1x VGA port • 2W stereo speakers • 248x230x180mm (HxWxD) • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/19952

VERDICT: It's not the cheapest, the biggest or the most exciting budget monitor, but its flexibility could make this one the right choice



ALTERNATIVE: Dell UltraSharp U2414H
£190 This elegant 24in panel is our favourite for construction and picture quality, but it does cost quite a bit more



PRINTER | £86 from Viking www.snipca.com/19976

Brother MFC-J680DW

A do-it-all inkjet

This multi-function printer makes a neat and businesslike impression. Functions are controlled using a large colour touchscreen on the front panel, which is thoughtfully angled upwards. And if you're working from your PC, Brother's software makes things straightforward. The top of the unit has a flatbed scanner with a 20-page automatic document feeder (ADF) that makes scanning or copying multi-page documents stress free. Black-and-white and colour faxing are also supported. Wi-Fi is built in, but Ethernet isn't, which won't bother many home users.



of the paper (called duplex printing), but the ink showed through when we tried it. Black text looked solid, if a little ragged on close inspection, and colour graphics were vivid. Photos looked fine, but you wouldn't choose this model primarily for photo printing, or for digitising a collection of prints: scans were sharp, but dark areas could get muddy. Ink costs work out at 7p per colour page, which is about average.

Brother lists a retail price of £128 for the MFC-J680DW. We found most dealers were asking about £106, while Viking, the office-supplies company, had it for £20 less. That sounds like a bargain, but Brother's MFC-J5320DW (recommended retail price £155) is even more heavily discounted at the moment (£80 from Amazon www.snipca.com/19977) and superior in various important aspects. With similar features overall, it also prints A3 pages, was even quicker in our tests, and supports XL ink cartridges that can halve the cost per page.

At the recommended retail prices, the MFC-J680DW would be worth considering, but at these prices the J5320DW is clearly the better buy.

“It's an easy-to-use

and fairly fast printer, but not Brother's best bargain”

While loading paper and ink is a little fiddly, we had no serious problems. Once up and running, the MFC-J680DW reached an acceptable 5.5 pages per minute (ppm) printing colour graphics pages, and printed a borderless postcard-size colour photo in two minutes. Black-text documents came out at 12ppm, or 15.5ppm in draft quality.

Scanning was also fairly pacy. It took 10 seconds to preview an A4 page and 15 to scan it in colour at a high-quality 300 dots per inch (dpi). Colour photocopies took 22 seconds, black and white took 17, falling to 18 or 15 when multiple pages were fed through the ADF. Using the maximum 1200dpi resolution to capture more detail, a 6x4in colour photo scanned in a reasonable 53 seconds.

The MFC-J680DW can print both sides

SPECIFICATIONS

6000x1200dpi maximum print resolution • 1200x2400dpi maximum scan resolution • 6.8cm colour touchscreen • USB • 802.11n Wi-Fi • 240x490x290mm (HxWxD) • 10.8kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19978

VERDICT: There's nothing much wrong with this multi-function printer, but thanks to the vagaries of discounting it's not Brother's best bargain



ALTERNATIVE: Brother MFC-J5320DW £80 Its A3 option is too fiddly for more than occasional use, but this similar-looking model gives you more for your money



COMING SOON



SPRING 2016

The MateBook is Huawei's first stab at a Windows 10 tablet, and it looks great, with a narrow bezel around the 12in screen and a leather-backed snap-on keyboard. But it's not cheap, prices will start at just under £700.



SPRING 2016

Expected in April, LG's G5 is a new kind of flagship smartphone with a modular design. This means you'll be able to add upgrades such as cameras, replaceable batteries and memory cards. Yet it has a slim metal body that looks like a premium phone. Will it catch on?



SPRING 2016

A proper graphics card can help with tasks like video editing. Lenovo's 14in laptop-tablet hybrid take that on board: the Yoga 710 (around £705) will include an Nvidia GTX 940M, while an AMD Radeon R7 M460 is an option on the Yoga 510 (from around £550).



SUMMER 2016

Independent manufacturer OnePlus has shown it can do better than the big brands with its low-cost, high-spec phones, and soon we'll see another, possibly called the OnePlus 3. Expect a top-end Snapdragon processor and another affordable price tag.



NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
13 April



Dell Inspiron 11 3000
Latest low-cost Windows 10 laptop



HP Deskjet 3630
A bargain multi-function printer... or is it?

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Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus UX305

£570 from www.snipca.com/19439

Tested: Issue 447



13.3in is a practical size for a laptop, and this light but sturdy 'ultrabook' has a smart and slim design that does justice to its capable performance. Upgradeable to Windows 10, it's limited mainly by its 128GB SSD, which makes it work fast but might leave you needing more space.

ALTERNATIVE Toshiba Satellite C40-C

This 14in Windows 10 laptop looks like it costs a lot more. It's not the most amazing PC, but it's fantastic for the price. £199 from www.snipca.com/19436

DESKTOP PC

Mesh Elite Essential Skylake CA

£499 from www.snipca.com/19822

Tested: Issue 471



This compact tower system spends your money wisely on an excellent Intel i5 Skylake processor for all-round performance. The 2TB hard drive gives you plenty of space for all your files, and fast 802.11ac Wi-Fi is built in.

ALTERNATIVE: Palicomp AMD

Shockwave If you want more gaming capability, this system based on AMD processors is also great value. £500 from www.snipca.com/18748

TABLET

Apple iPad Mini 4

£319 from www.snipca.com/18100

Tested: Issue 460



The 2015 update to Apple's 7.9in tablet greatly improves the screen and camera, boosts performance, and makes it worth the £100 extra over the iPad mini 2 (still a good budget buy). Go for the £399 64GB version if you can, though.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPad Air 2

The 9.7in option is still slim and light, also has Touch ID and Apple Pay, and the range of apps beats Android. £399 from www.snipca.com/18139

PHONE

Apple iPhone 6s

£539 from www.snipca.com/18240

Tested: Issue 461



It may look like the 2014 model, but this update is stronger and faster, with a higher-resolution camera, time-saving 3D Touch features and an excellent screen. The bigger 6s Plus has better battery life.

ALTERNATIVE: Moto X Play

Motorola's fun phone may be plasticky, but it runs Android 5 smoothly. The screen, camera and battery life are all big pluses. £260 from www.snipca.com/17934

DIGITAL CAMERA

Panasonic Lumix FZ330

£449 from www.snipca.com/19441

Tested: Issue 462



A wide-angle lens to capture scenes, a longer fast lens for flattering portraits and a telephoto for distant subjects – the 12-megapixel FZ330 gives you them all in one unit, with a fixed high-quality zoom lens.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony A5000

This neat compact system camera (CSC) lets you choose different lenses from Sony's range for more creative possibilities. £249 from www.snipca.com/15854

E-READER

Amazon Kindle Paperwhite

£110 from www.snipca.com/17776

Tested: Issue 458



With a new high-resolution screen, the affordable Kindle lacks only automatic brightness adjustment and page-turn buttons (you have to swipe the screen). It's great value as long as you're happy to buy your books from Amazon.

ALTERNATIVE: Kobo Glo HD

As good as the Paperwhite, but with more storage and slightly more compact, this is the independent e-reader to pick. £117 from www.snipca.com/19158

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AOC G2460PF

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SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2016

£19.99 from www.snipca.com/17874

Tested: Issue 437



Kaspersky Internet Security 2016 has won our past seven antivirus tests. Compatible with Windows 10, the 2016 edition is available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-device licence, or buy a three-device licence for just £39.99 at www.snipca.com/17903.

ALTERNATIVE: Avast Free Antivirus

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but sometimes blocked legitimate software. Free from www.snipca.com/16493

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 6

£104 from www.snipca.com/16952

Tested: Issue 453



Lightroom is the professional's choice for managing and tweaking photos, including raw files from DSLR cameras. If you need Photoshop for more advanced editing, get both on the Adobe CC Photography Plan for £8.57 a month (www.snipca.com/19283).

ALTERNATIVE: Xara Photo & Graphic Designer 11

For all-round design and drawing plus photo filters, this affordable app has a lot to offer. £50 from www.snipca.com/19280

SMART TV

Samsung UE40H5500

£398 from www.snipca.com/19160

Tested: Issue 446



A 40in smart TV with great picture quality and apps for all the terrestrial TV catch-up services. It has plenty of extras too, such as recording to USB storage, playing media files stored on a NAS or USB stick and plenty of HDMI ports.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony KDL-43W755C

Excellent image quality, stylish looks and a 43in screen. £429 from www.snipca.com/18153

PC MONITOR

AOC Q2778VQE

£214 from www.snipca.com/19416

Tested: Issue 468



It comes with no extras, such as built-in speakers or a USB hub, but this 2560x1440 panel gives you a full 27in screen with excellent contrast and colour accuracy at a very reasonable price. It's a little laggy for gamers, but there's no ghosting on motion.

ALTERNATIVE: Dell UltraSharp U2414H

This 1920x1080, 24in screen has a stand that can switch to portrait mode. Colour accuracy is excellent. £186 from www.snipca.com/18207

ROUTER

Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£126 from www.snipca.com/19437

Tested: Issue 427



An incredibly fast 802.11ac router that's also one of the cheapest we've seen. It's superb and it's the router to buy if you're ready to make the jump to 802.11ac.

ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC

More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features too. £180 from www.snipca.com/14950

NAS

Synology DiskStation DS215j

£132 from www.snipca.com/16187

Tested: Issue 449



This two-drive NAS enclosure has it all – fast performance, easy configuration and plenty of extra features. Its only flaw is that installation is a little fiddly – but if you want quality network storage, then this is the obvious choice.

ALTERNATIVE: Synology DS414j

A four-drive NAS that's generally fast, easy to set up and use. £245 from www.snipca.com/16707

HOMEPLUGS

Devolo dLAN 1200 Triple+ Starter Kit

£119 from www.snipca.com/15369

Tested: Issue 444



Devolo's latest HomePlug adapters are the fastest we've ever seen. They're well designed too, with a passthrough socket so you can still power another device and the design should avoid skirting boards and other obstacles.

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link PowerLine AV2 1000HD Gigabit Starter Kit Fast (speeds of up to 1000Mbps), much cheaper and very easy to set up, but the lack of a passthrough socket is frustrating. £45 from www.snipca.com/17836

WEB-DESIGN

Xara Web Designer Premium 11

£70 from www.snipca.com/16955

Tested: Issue 453



This visual web-design program makes creating sites more like laying out a document than writing HTML code, and sites can be responsive, meaning they look right on both big and small screens without extra work. A basic version is also available for half the price.

ALTERNATIVE: Incomedia WebSite X5 v12 Evolution It may feel a little basic, but this straightforward program outputs efficient HTML code and responsive pages. £38 from www.snipca.com/19440

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 2 Varidesk Soho White desks

Varidesk makes stand-up desks that give you the option of standing up or sitting down while working at your computer. The Soho White is the company's smallest model at 76.2cm wide, and pops up or folds down in just seconds. It can sit on top of desks, and is sturdy and stable even when fully extended. To enter, email your address to acomp@dennis.co.uk with 'varidesk' in the subject line by midnight 12 April.



The Varidesk Soho White is available to buy now priced £150 from <http://uk.varidesk.com>. For updates on Varidesk products follow @VariDeskUK and 'like' www.facebook.com/VarideskUK.

MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER

PRICE DROP

Canon Pixma MG5750

£60 from www.snipca.com/20021

Tested: Issue 470



You don't get many frills, but this compact all-in-one printer/scanner includes all the essentials, like Wi-Fi and printing both sides of the paper (duplex), at a reasonable price. It's fairly quick, running costs are better than average, and the five-ink system ensures photos and black text both come out looking great.

ALTERNATIVE: Brother MFC-J5320DW For more business-type tasks, this all-in-one has automatic paper feed for the scanner and the ability to print occasional A3 pages. £80 from www.snipca.com/19674

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Crucial BX100 1TB

£267 from www.snipca.com/19572

Tested: Issue 445



A blindingly fast, high-capacity SSD at a lower price than ever before. If you've been put off buying a SSD because of the cost, then now is finally the time to take the plunge.

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung 850 Pro 256GB An even faster SSD, but it's much more expensive per gigabyte. £95 from www.snipca.com/20022

SECURITY CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£130 from www.snipca.com/11646

Tested: Issue 420



A home-security camera that's well priced and easy to set up. Plus, it has great picture quality, useful apps and there's no need to subscribe to any extra services. It's a worthy successor to the original HomeMonitor, our previous favourite security camera.

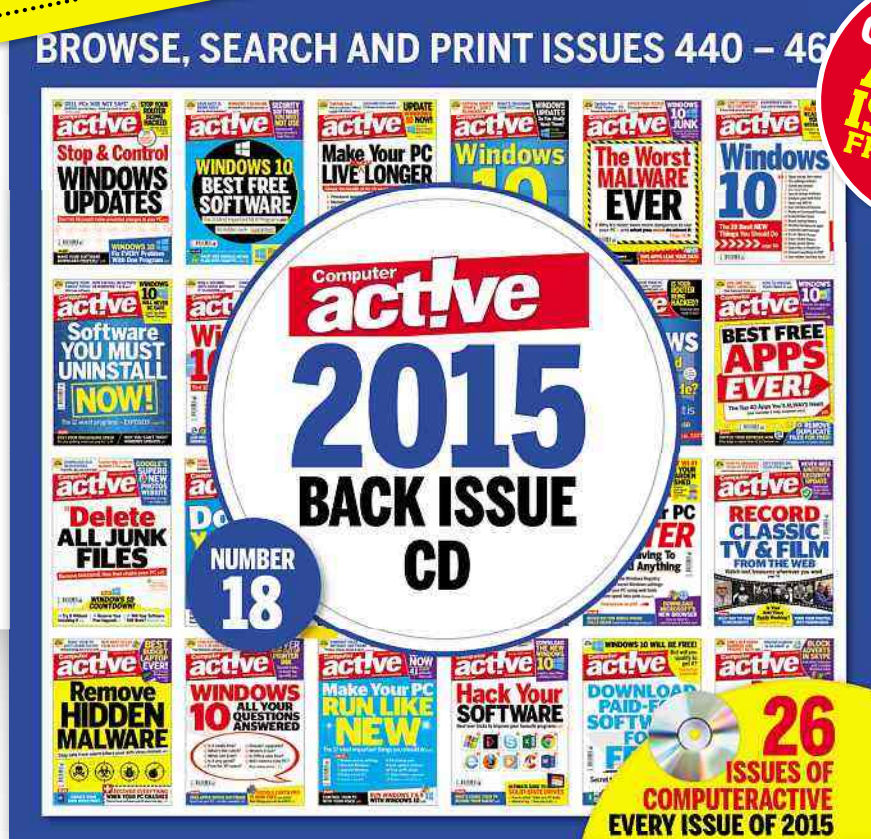
ALTERNATIVE: D-Link Wireless N Day & Night Camera A good-value security camera with excellent night vision. £88 from www.snipca.com/15275

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14 pages of easy-to-follow workshops and expert tips

35 Scan for Windows 10 malware

38 Uninstall junk using Kaspersky's new tool

40 Quickly open hidden PC folders

42 Block all adverts on your phone and tablet

PLUS

43 Readers' Tips

44 Phone & Tablet Tips

46 Make Windows Better

47 Make Office Better

48 Secret Tips For... PC screenshots

Scan for Windows 10 malware

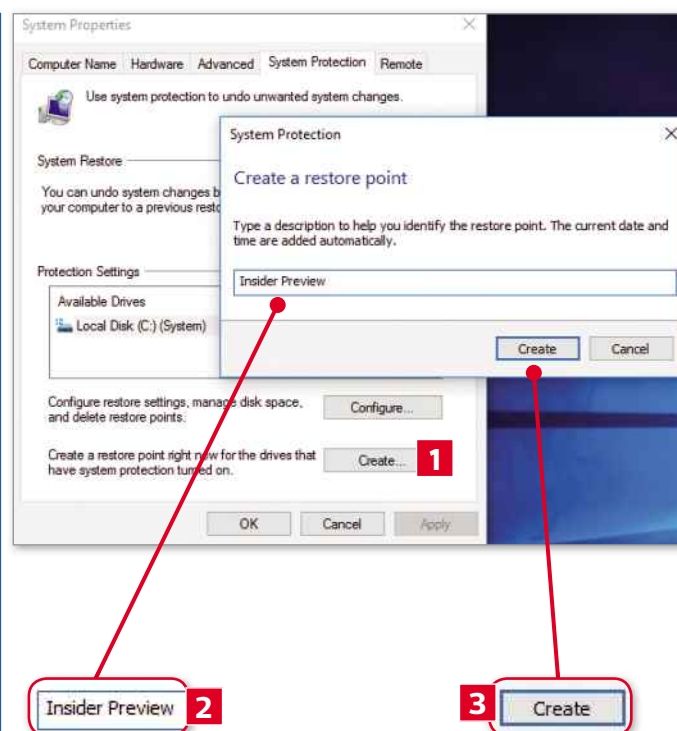
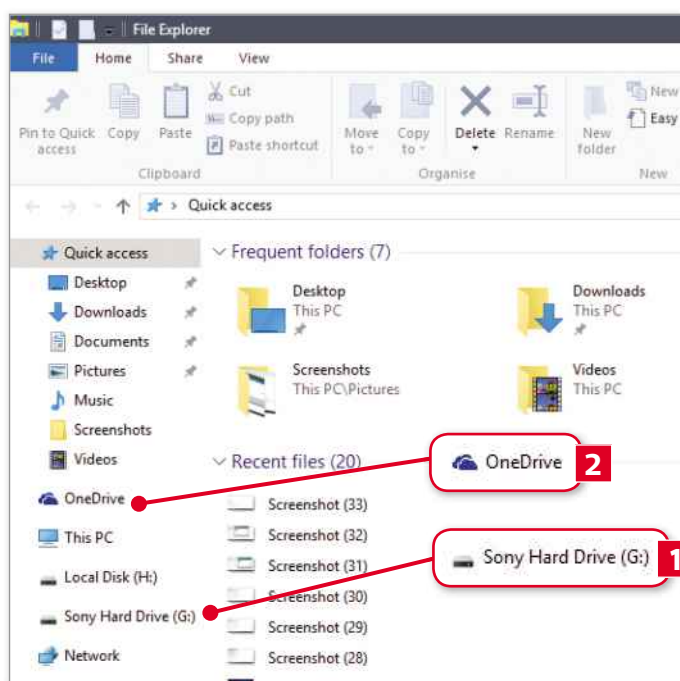
What you need: Windows 10 **Time required:** 2 hours

In Issue 471, we reported that Microsoft has launched a new 'offline' version of Windows Defender that prevents malware from running when you boot your PC (see News, page 9). The feature is only available if you

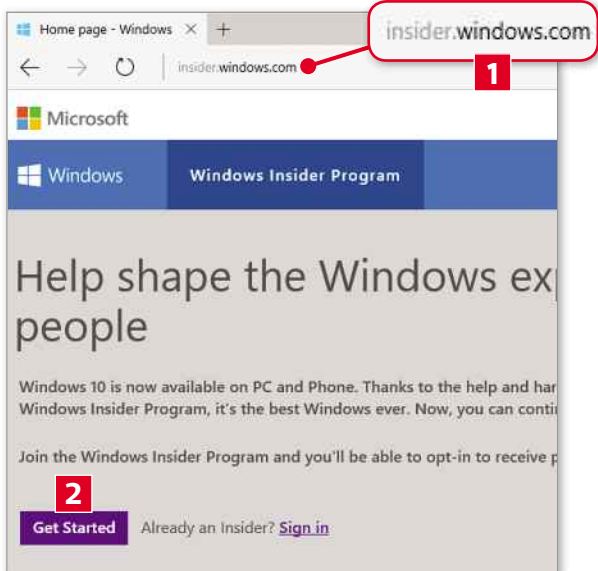
sign up to the 'Fast Ring' of the Windows 10 Insider Program. We'll explain what this means, how to do this safely and how to use Microsoft's latest and most powerful security tool.



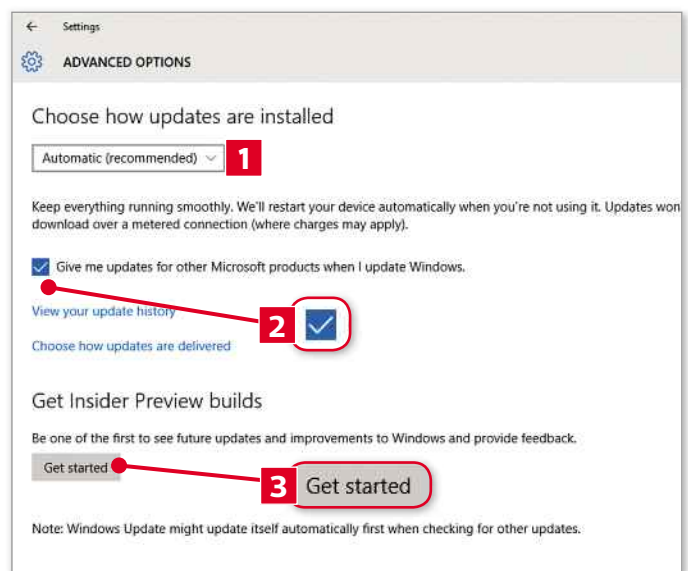
STEP 1 The Windows 10 Insider Program allows PC users to try new features that may be unstable or flawed. Users can then provide feedback so that Microsoft can fine-tune these features before releasing them as part of the next major Windows 10 update (codenamed Redstone, scheduled for June). Before switching to the Insider Program, you should ensure you've backed up all your important data – either to an external hard drive **1** or to a cloud-storage service, such as OneDrive **2**, Google Drive or Dropbox.



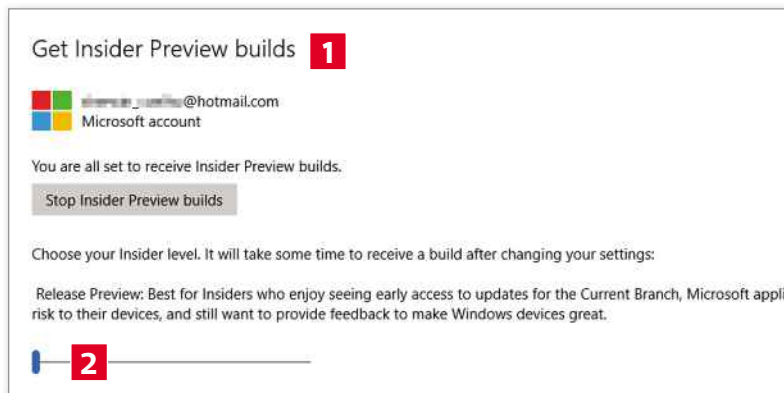
STEP 2 You should then create a **system restore point**, so that you can undo any system changes later if necessary. To do that, press the Enter key, type **create a restore point**, then press Enter. Now click Create **1**, name your restore point **2**, then click Create **3**. When you see a message confirming this has been done, click Close, then close the System Properties window. Now save any files you're working on and close all the programs on your PC.



STEP 3 To join the Windows 10 Insider Program, open the Microsoft Edge browser on your PC, go to insider.windows.com **1**, click Get Started **2**, log in with your Microsoft account, then click Join and accept any prompts. You can now download and install the Windows Insider Preview build on your PC. To do that, go to Settings, click 'Update & security', select Windows Update at the top left then click the 'Advanced options' link at the bottom.

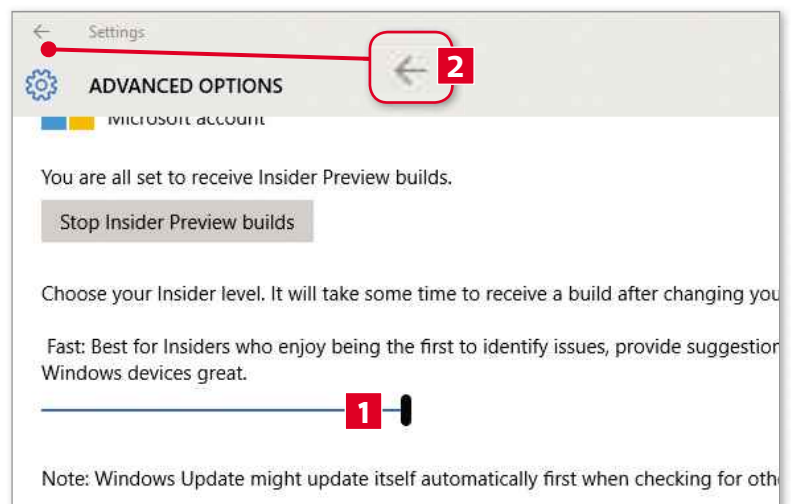


STEP 4 Ensure the dropdown menu at the top is set to 'Automatic (recommended)' **1**, then tick 'Give me updates for other Microsoft products when I update Windows' **2**. Next, click 'Get started' **3**. When you see a warning about installing pre-release software, click Next, then click Confirm on the next screen. Finally click 'Restart now'.



STEP 5 When your PC restarts, navigate back to Windows Update and click the 'Advanced options' link (see Step 3). Now scroll to the 'Get Insider Preview builds' section **1**. The Windows Insider Preview is comprised of three 'Rings'. Users on the Fast Ring get new features earliest, but these may be unstable and prone to crashes. Once any flaws at this stage are fixed, the features are released to users on the Slow Ring for further testing. After further refinement, they're released to users on the Release Preview Ring. You'll notice that the slider **2** is set to Release Preview by default.

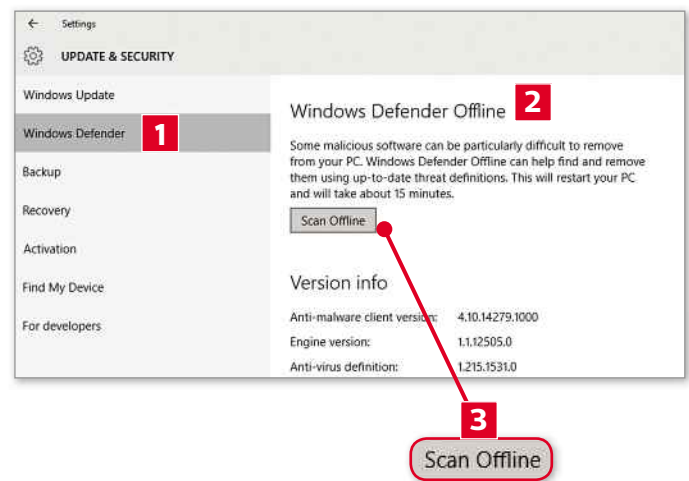
STEP 6 At the time of writing, Windows Defender Offline is only available to users on the Fast Ring. To switch to the Fast Ring, move the slider to the right **1**. Now go back **2** and click 'Check for updates'. At this point, some users see the following message at the bottom of the Windows Update section: 'There's a problem with getting new builds... Your preview build settings need attention'. If you see this message, try applying the fixes posted on this Microsoft forum (www.snipca.com/19988).



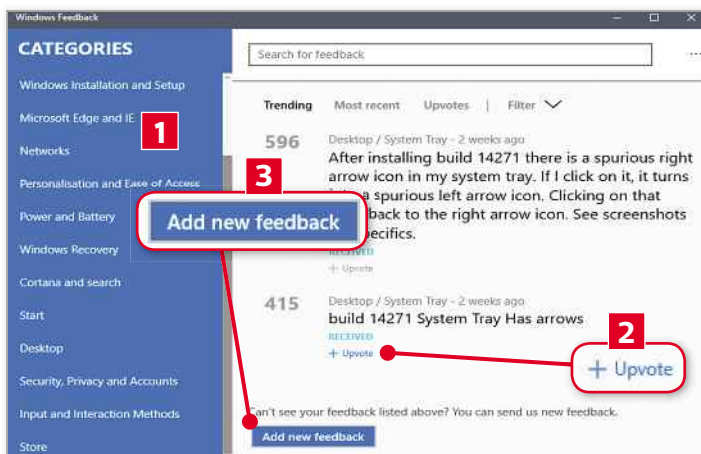
Scan for Windows 10 malware



STEP 7 Switching to the Fast Ring of the Insider Preview can take anything up to a couple of days. This is because all the Fast Ring features are automatically downloaded as a huge update in the background. The update is then applied when you restart your PC (this can take up to two hours). To make sure you've successfully switched to the Fast Ring, press the Windows key, type **run**, then press Enter. Now type **winver** into the Run box and press Enter again. If you're on the Fast Ring, your PC Build will say 'Version 1511 (OS Build 14279.1000)' **1** – this was the latest Fast Ring build at the time of writing.

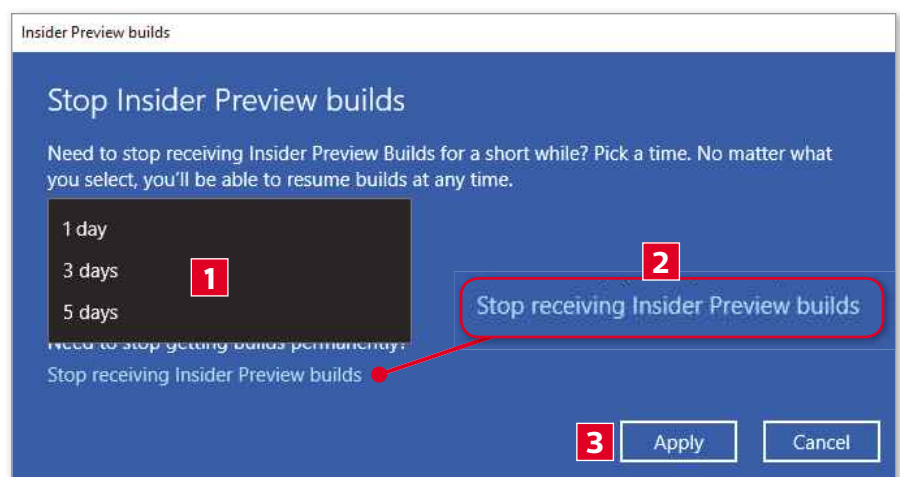


STEP 8 You can now use Windows Defender's new Offline mode. To do that, open Settings, click 'Update & security', then click Windows Defender **1** and scroll to the bottom. You'll see a Windows Defender Offline section **2**. Close any open files and programs on your PC, then click Scan Offline **3**. Your PC will reboot and start a Windows Defender boot scan, which takes around 10-15 minutes. This will scan for viruses and malware and eliminate them upon reboot.



STEP 9 While Windows Defender is a good basic security program, we recommend you also use an antivirus program to enhance your overall security (Kaspersky Internet Security is our recommended program – see page 68). To provide Microsoft with feedback, search for and open the Windows Feedback app. Here, select a relevant category on the left **1**, then select one of the listed problems **2**. You can also add your own feedback **3**.

STEP 10 If you want to opt out of the Windows 10 Insider Preview and switch back to the stable release of Windows 10, there's an easy way to do this. Go to the 'Advanced options' section again (see Step 3), then click the 'Stop Insider Preview builds' button. The dropdown menu **1** lets you automatically revert to the Insider Preview after 1, 3, or 5 days. If you want to permanently switch to the stable version of Windows 10, click the 'Stop receiving Insider Preview builds' link **2**, then click Apply **3**. Next, click Confirm then 'Restart now'. As with updating to the Fast Ring, going back may take a day or two. ●



Uninstall junk using Kaspersky's new tool

What you need: Kaspersky Cleaner; All Windows versions (XP to 10)

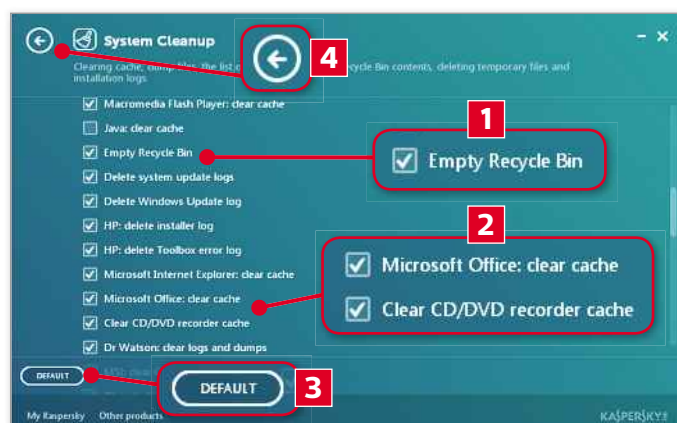
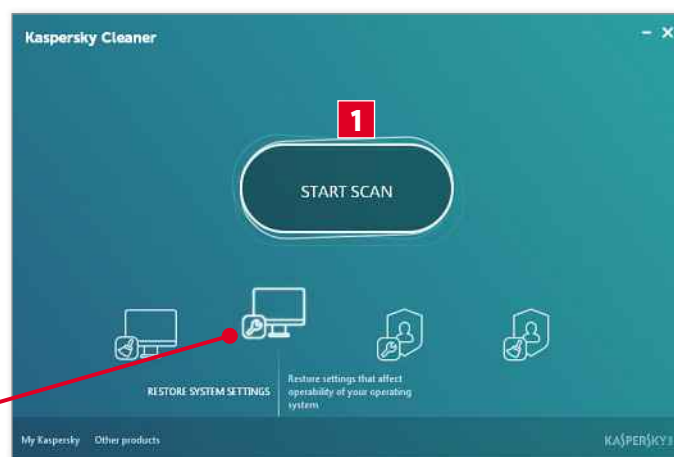
Time required: 20 minutes

Kaspersky, whose antivirus has won our past seven group tests (see page 68), has released a free PC-optimisation program called Kaspersky Cleaner. It scans your PC for junk (including the **cache** and **temporary internet files**) and lets

you delete it. Doing this will make your PC faster and free up valuable storage space. The program is still in **beta** so its default settings are pretty basic, but we'll show you how to tweak these for a more comprehensive PC tune-up.



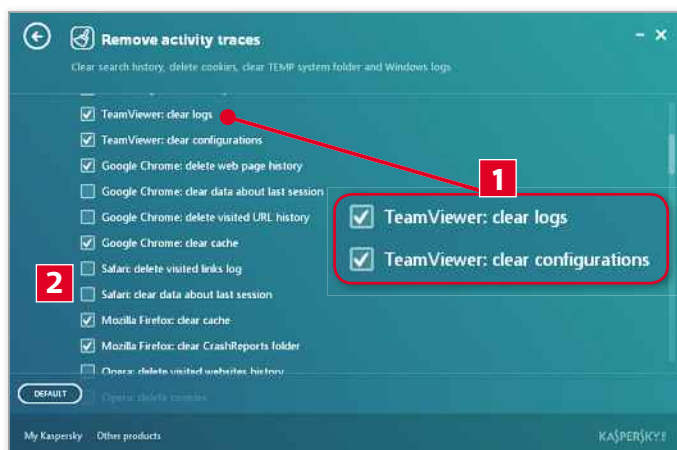
STEP 1 To download the program, go to www.free.kaspersky.com, scroll through the list of Kaspersky programs and click the green Download button beside Kaspersky Cleaner Beta. Open the downloaded setup file, click Install and wait until that's done. When the program launches, you'll see one big button **1** and four section icons below – System Cleanup, Restore System Settings, Private Browsing and Remote Activity Traces. Move your cursor over each icon **2** to see what that section does. Each section has a list of PC options (as tickboxes) that are divided into three categories – 'Important issues', 'Medium severity issues' and 'Minor problems'.



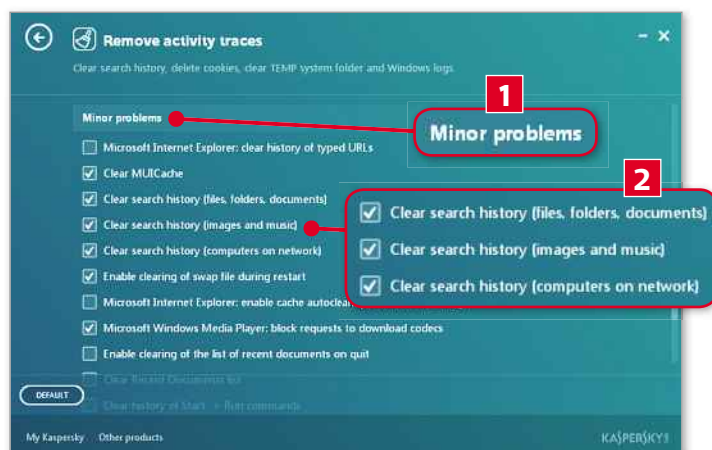
STEP 2 While going through each section, we found some important options that are not ticked by default. For example, click the first section System Cleanup and scroll to the 'Medium-severity issues' category. Here, you should tick Empty Recycle Bin **1** and the boxes to delete the cache from Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office **2**. Whenever you tick an option, you'll see a Default button **3**. If you ever want to revert to the program's default settings, click the Default button. If you use Google Earth, scroll to the bottom and tick the last box to delete its cache files. Finally, click the Back button **4** to return to the main screen.



STEP 3 Now click the second section 'Restore system settings', scroll to the bottom and tick the last box 'Windows Explorer: show extensions for known file types'. Go back and click the third section, Private Browsing. You'll see the option to Disable Cortana in the 'Important issues' category. In the 'Minor problems' section **1**, tick the second box **2**. This lets you automatically clean up Internet Explorer's cache whenever you close the browser. After doing this, go back **3** and click the last section – 'Remove activity traces'.

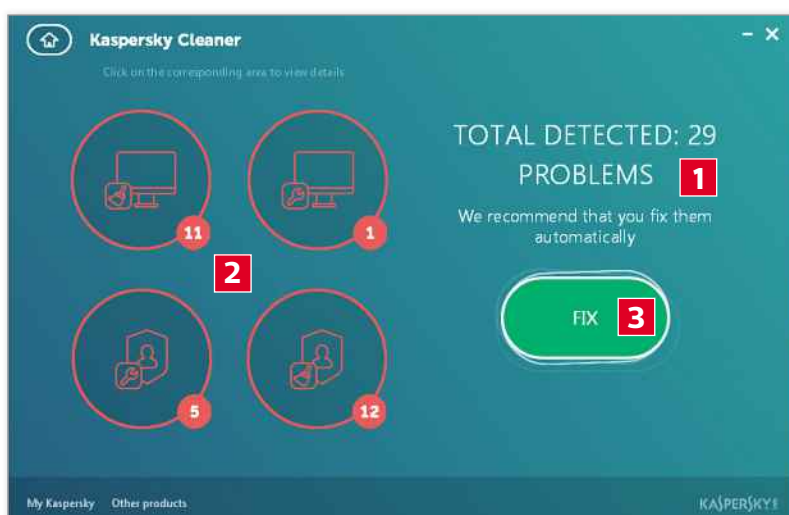


STEP 4 In the 'Important issues' category, you'll see the option to clear your browser history. If you use the popular remote-access program TeamViewer, then tick 'TeamViewer: clear logs' and 'TeamViewer: clear configurations' **1** if you want to delete those settings. Below, you'll see options to delete the cache, cookies and passwords for all your browsers (Chrome, Firefox, Opera and Internet Explorer). Select the options you want to delete for the browser(s) that you use.



STEP 5 Scroll down to the 'Minor problems' category **1** where you'll see options to clear your File Explorer search history **2**, your Recent Documents list and even the option to clear any Run commands that you've typed (clearing them means they won't appear as part of your autosuggest options). You'll also see the option to clear your history in Paint and Windows Registry Editor. When you've ticked all the boxes that you want, go back and click the Start Scan button.

STEP 6 During the scan (which can take a few minutes), Kaspersky will check which of the ticked boxes require fixes. You'll see how many problems were detected on your PC **1**, a breakdown of the problems across each section and a Fix button. Click any of the sections **2** to see the problems in each (as red tickboxes). By default, all the boxes are ticked, meaning those problems will be solved when you apply the fix. Untick any boxes if you don't want to apply that particular fix. When you've finished, click the top-left Back button, then click the Fix button **3**.



STEP 7 You'll now see a summary of how many problems were eliminated **1**. The fixes won't be applied until you reboot your PC, so close all your programs, then click Reboot Now **2**. If you're working on something important, you can postpone the reboot **3**. We noticed that our PC took longer to shut down, but booted much faster. If you notice any faults with your PC after rebooting, it's likely that Kaspersky Cleaner changed some of your default settings when you applied the one-click fix. Thankfully, it lets you reverse some of these (though it doesn't specify which ones). To do that, open Kaspersky Cleaner, click Roll Back Changes, click Start Reverting Changes and wait until that's finished. ●

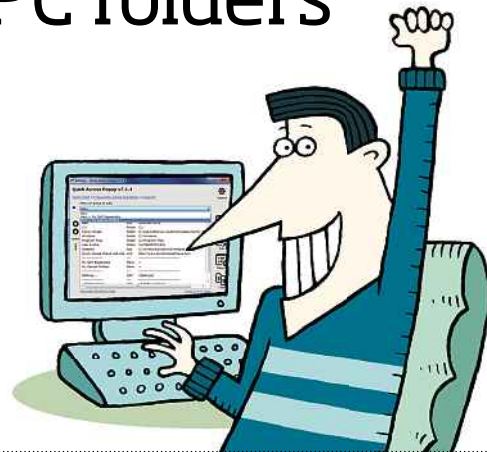
Quickly open hidden PC folders

What you need: Quick Access Popup; Windows 7, 8 or 10

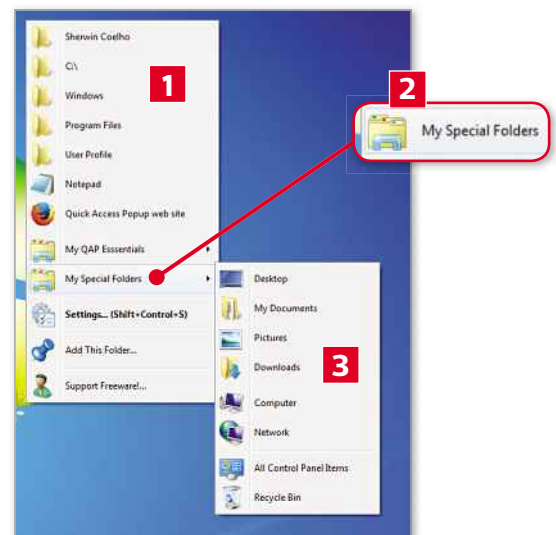
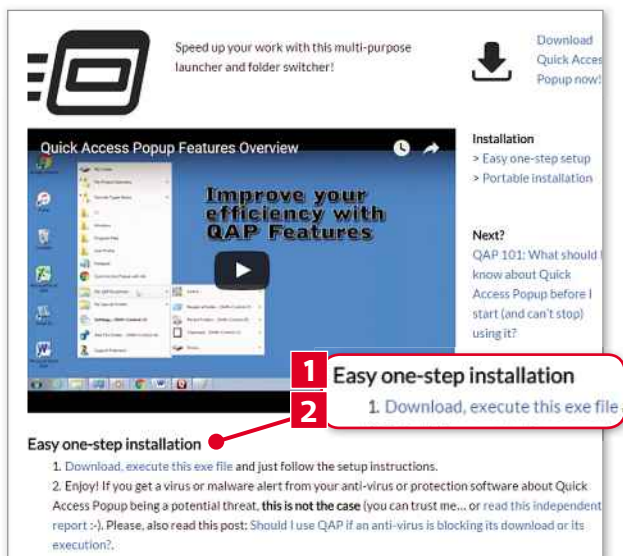
Time required: 30 minutes

Opening a folder that's buried deep in your PC's hard drive will often require multiple clicking, not to mention valuable time spent navigating through different sub-folders. One solution is to use Quick Access Popup (QAP), a great free program

that lets you open a list of useful folders and programs with a single mouse click or keyboard shortcut. You can easily customise your list, adding not only folders, but programs, websites and documents for quick and easy access.



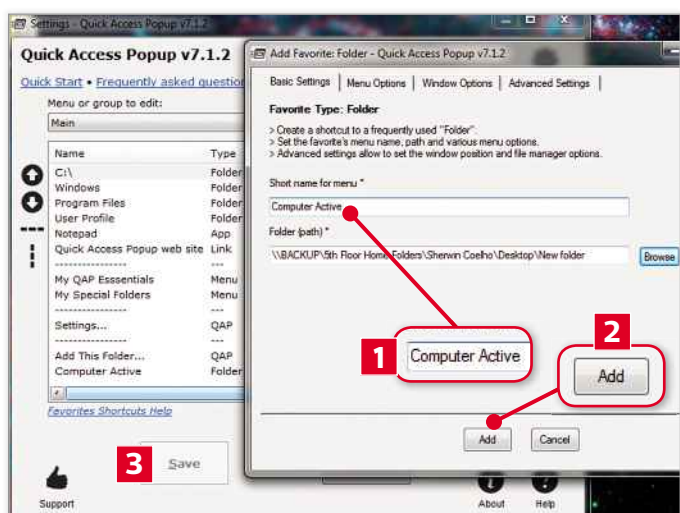
STEP 1 To download QAP, go to www.quickaccesspopup.com, scroll down to the 'Easy one-step installation' section **1** and click the 'Download, execute this exe file' link **2**. Now open the downloaded setup file. The program is safe, so ignore any warnings from your antivirus because these will be **false positives**. Click Run, Yes, OK, Next, accept the T&Cs, then keep clicking Next until you need to click Install. Finally, click Finish to launch the program.



STEP 2 You'll see a small taskbar notification telling you to press your middle mouse button or press Windows key+W. Either of these actions brings up QAP's list of default items. In the main section, you'll see your C drive, along with your Windows, Program Files and User Profiles folders **1**. You'll also see the option to open the program's website in your default browser. Below that, My Special Folders **2** contains a menu of other commonly used folders and locations (including Pictures, My Computer and Control Panel **3**).

STEP 3 The My QAP Essentials section (above My Special Folders) contains a menu with five further options. Switch **1** displays a list of all the folders, files and programs that are currently open on your PC **2**. The two options below Switch let you access the folders you recently opened. Clipboard saves any website address or folder path that you have copied. Click Drives **4** to see all your PC's drives listed.

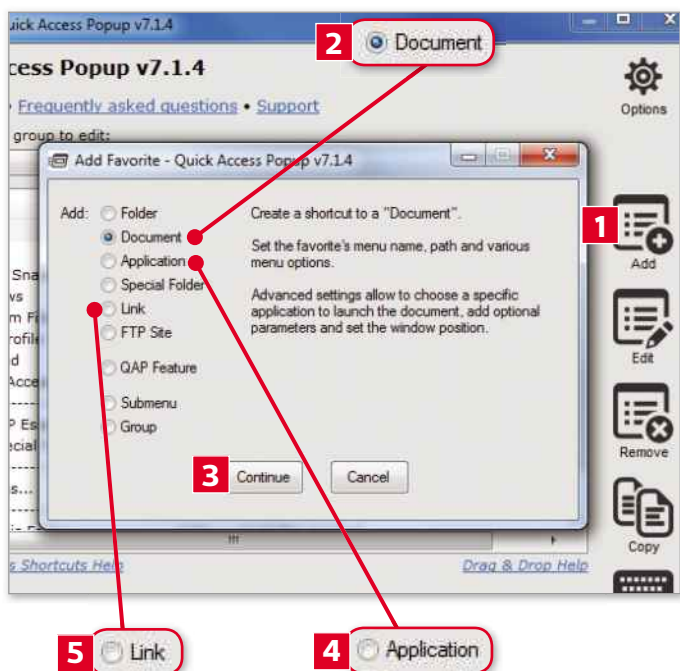




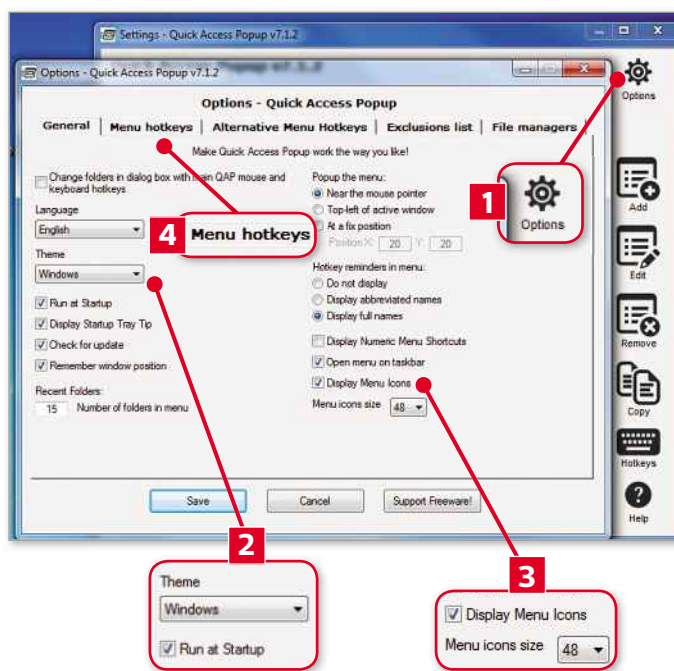
STEP 4 Adding a folder that you access often is easy. Simply open the folder on your PC, then press your middle mouse button (or Windows key+W) to open QAP. Next, click Add This Folder at the bottom. If you see a message saying you need to add the folder manually, follow the instructions in Step 5. Rename the folder (optional) **1**, then click Add **2**, followed by Save **3**.



STEP 5 To edit QAP's list of items, click Settings (or press Ctrl+Shift+S). The dropdown menu **1** lets you select the section you want to edit. To remove an item from the list, click to select it **2**, then click Remove **3**. If you need to add a folder manually (see Step 4), click the Add button **4**, select Folder, then click Continue. Now click the Browse button beside the 'Folder (path)' field, navigate to the folder you want, then click OK. Finally, click Add, then Save.



STEP 6 Similarly, to add a Word document to QAP's list, click the Add button **1**, select Document **2**, click Continue **3**, Browse, navigate to the document you want, rename it (optional), click Add, then Save. You can also add programs in the same way. First, ensure the program is running on your PC. Now select Application **4**, click Continue, then click the dropdown menu at the bottom, select the program, click Add, then Save. To add a website, select Link **5**, click Continue, type (or copy and paste) the URL you want, name it, click Add, then Save.



STEP 7 Now press Ctrl+Shift+S (to open Settings), then click Options **1**. Here, you can change the program's colour theme and choose whether you want it to start with your PC **2**. If you want to increase the size of QAP's items, tick Display Menu Icons then select a larger size from the dropdown menu **3**. You can also change QAP's default keyboard shortcut (Windows key+W). To do that, click the 'Menu hotkeys' tab **4**, then click the Change button beside Windows+W. Now tick to select the modifier key(s) you want to use. In the field provided, press the number or letter key you want to use in conjunction with your selected modifier(s). Click OK to save your new shortcut. Click Save to save your other changes. ●

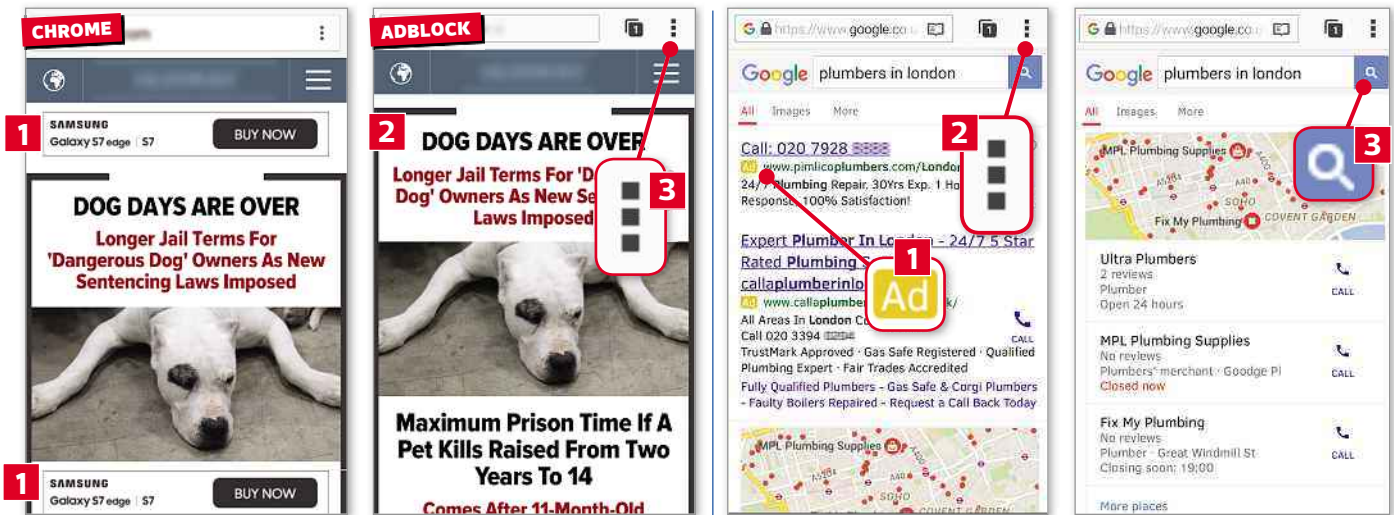
Block all adverts on your phone and tablet

What you need: Adblock Browser; Android/iOS phone or tablet

Time required: 15 minutes

All mobile browsers display ads by default. These include everything from banners and Google's sponsored links – which are merely annoying – to malicious ads (malvertising) that put your device and its contents at risk – a phenomenon that's becoming increasingly common (see [www](http://www.snipca.com/20053).

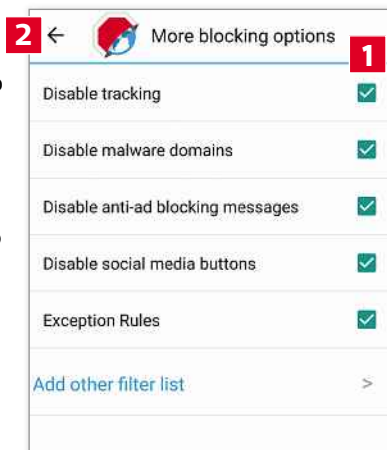
www.snipca.com/20053). Adblock Browser is a free app that will eliminate these nuisances and keep you safe by blocking all types of advert on your device. We're using the Android app (www.snipca.com/20046) here, but the iOS app (www.snipca.com/20047) works in a similar way.



STEP 1 We'll first show you how Adblock Browser blocks banner adverts. Open the app, tap Only One More Step, then tap Finish. Now tap the search field at the top and go to a website that contains banner adverts. On other browsers (such as Chrome), you'd see two banner adverts at the top and bottom **1** of the page. However, these adverts don't appear in Adblock Browser **2**. If you do see them, then simply tap the menu icon **3**, tick 'Block ads on this site', then refresh the page to get rid of them.

STEP 2 When you search for something in Google on your device (for example, 'plumbers in london'), you'll notice the first few search results are sponsored links **1**. Using Adblock Browser, you can eliminate these adverts. To do that, tap the menu icon **2**, Settings, 'Ad blocking', Acceptable Ads, then untick 'Allow some non-intrusive advertising'. Now return to your search page and tap the search icon **3**. You'll see these sponsored links have disappeared from your search results.

STEP 3 We'll now show you how to enhance Adblock Browser's overall protection. Go to the 'Ad blocking' section (See Step 2), then tap 'More blocking options', which includes the ability to 'disable' (ie, block) websites known to contain malware. Tick all the boxes **1**. Adblock Browser also lets you clear your browsing data when you exit the app. To do this, tap the back button **2** twice, tap Privacy, then tick the first and last boxes. Finally, tap the tickboxes to select all the data you want to clear upon exiting (browsing history, search history, downloads, etc.), then tap Set.



NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
13 April

- Back up Windows 10 automatically
- Rename multiple files in one go
- Make restore points easier to set up
- Add your photos to a world map



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TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

'Type' documents using your voice

I don't use Word and Excel as often as I used to, so I chose not to subscribe to Microsoft Office 365 when I bought my new Windows 10 PC. Instead, I use Google Docs. The other day when using

the service, I was informed about a new feature that lets you dictate text and make text edits using your voice. I initially thought this was a bit gimmicky, but decided to give it a go. To my surprise, the feature worked quite well. It only works in Google Chrome (www.google.com/chrome). Go to docs.google.com, then log into your Gmail account. Click Blank to create a new document or open any of your previous files.

Now click the Tools tab, then click the 'Voice typing' option (see screenshot left). You'll see a big microphone button. It's set to 'English (US)' by default, so change it to 'English (UK)' using the dropdown menu.

Now simply click the mic icon, click Allow, then slowly dictate what you would type. Say 'New line' or 'New paragraph' and your cursor will automatically jump to the next line/paragraph.

This video (www.snipca.com/19945) shows you some other useful commands you can use with Google Docs, including how to delete text and create bullet points. It managed to type 80 per cent of what I was saying correctly. I also found it much easier to edit the text later, as opposed to typing the entire thing. To save this file to your PC, click the File tab, move your cursor to 'Download as', then select in what format you want it (Word or PDF).

Graham Wilson

The winner of every Tip of the Fortnight wins this exclusive Computeractive mug!

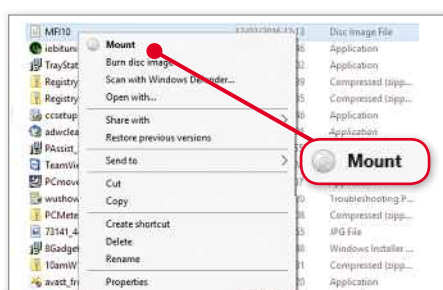


ISO FILES

Run ISO files in Windows 10

I can't believe that I know something about Windows 10 that your magazine overlooked. In Step 1 of the useful 'Add Windows 7 tools to Windows 10' Workshop (Issue 470), you told readers to burn the downloaded ISO file to a DVD before running the program. While this is very useful if you want to want to reuse the DVD (and its contents) later, it's not mandatory to do this in Windows 10. Unlike earlier Windows versions, Microsoft's latest operating system lets you run ISO files without first writing it to a disc. To do this, simply right-click the file, then click Mount (see screenshot below). Your PC may take a few seconds to extract any files or folders, after which it'll display the contents of ISO files in a list.

John van Someren



WINDOWS SHUTDOWN

Shut down without installing updates

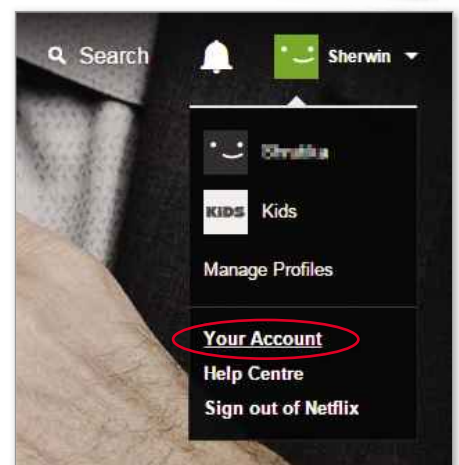
My PC somehow always tends to have pending updates, so your 'Bypass installing updates when you shut down' tip in Issue 471 (Make Windows Better, page 46) could not have come at a better time. I also read another way to achieve the same result without resorting to your PC's Command Prompt. Simply press Ctrl+Alt+Del to go to your PC's logoff screen. Now click the small dropdown menu beside your PC's power button (at the bottom right of your screen). You'll see the option to shut down without installing updates.

Bob Kennedy

NETFLIX

Tailor your Netflix recommendations

I like exploring new films and TV shows in Netflix. Often I don't finish watching something because I lose interest, but it'll still appear in my Continue Watching list. If it's a particular genre, then I start seeing similar content as 'suggested movies' in my Netflix feed. Until recently, I didn't know you could remove specific content that you've watched from your Netflix browsing



history. I wanted to do this so they don't influence my Netflix recommendations.

To do that, log into Netflix at www.netflix.com (it's free for the first month, £5.99 per month thereafter), click your name dropdown menu at the top right, then click 'Your Account' (see screenshot above). Now click 'Viewing activity' at the bottom right. You'll see a list of all the films and TV shows that you've watched. Simply click the 'x' icon to remove the ones you don't want. Within a day, this content will stop appearing in your Continue Watching list and will stop influencing your recommendations.

Peter Simpson

Phone and Tablet Tips

Brilliant things to do on your device

ANDROID

Navigate long documents quickly



Google Docs on Android has a new feature that lets you quickly jump to any section within your document. This is particularly handy if you are working with longer documents. Previously, you had to scroll through to find what you wanted.

If you're creating a document using Google Docs, you need to make sure that it's broken down into separate sections. Give each section a heading and ensure this is in bold. Now whenever you access these documents via the Google Docs app, simply scroll up or

down to see a small slider (with two arrows) on the right, then tap this. All your document headings will appear on the right (see screenshot below left). Tap the one you want to go directly to that section.

iOS

Take the perfect photo in any light



The UK's perennially dull weather isn't great for taking good photos. However, there's an easy way to improve photos taken in overcast conditions. Open the Camera app and point at your subject. Now, instead of simply tapping the shutter button, you

should first tap on the area of the photo you want as your focal point. For example, if you're taking a photo of your grandson playing in the garden, tap the image of him on the screen. A yellow square will appear around him, indicating that he is the focal point of the picture.

You'll also see a small sun icon beside this square. Tap and hold this icon, then move it up or down to make the image brighter or darker (depending on the general light conditions). When you're happy with your setting, tap the shutter icon to take your photo.

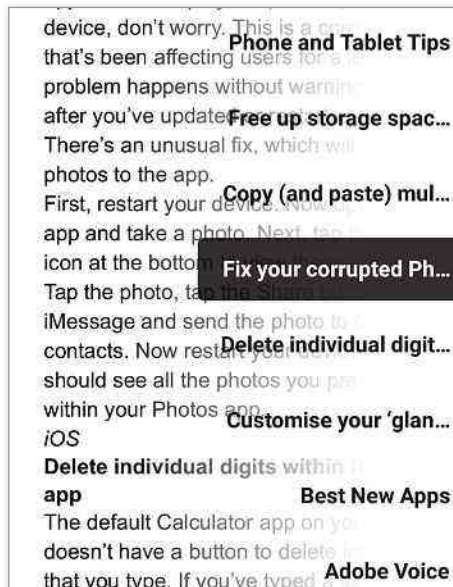
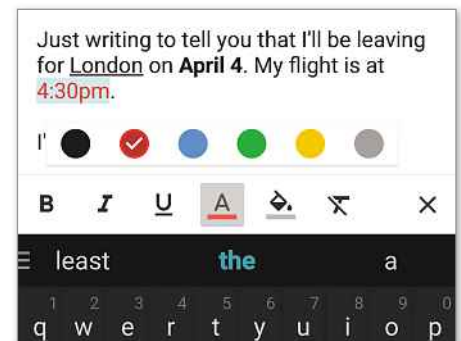
ANDROID

Add text formatting within Gmail



We take it for granted that we can bold up, italicise, underline and change the colour of text in any email program, so it seems surprising that until recently you couldn't apply these formatting actions in Gmail on your device. Thankfully, a recent Android update has changed that.

To format text within the body of your email, simply tap and hold somewhere within the relevant body of text, then drag the slider to select the entire text you want to format. Next, tap the Format option (to the left of Cut, Copy and Paste). You'll now see a new panel below giving you options to bold up, italicise and underline your text (see screenshot below). The A icon brings up a colour palette, while the icon to the right of it lets you highlight the selected text. Tap the 'T' icon if you want to undo the formatting changes you've applied to your text.



Best New Apps

What you should install this fortnight

LumaFX – infinite video effects £3.99

iOS: www.snipca.com/20027

LumaFX is pricey for an app, but is worth every penny if you want a reliable video-editing tool for your iPhone or iPad. It lets



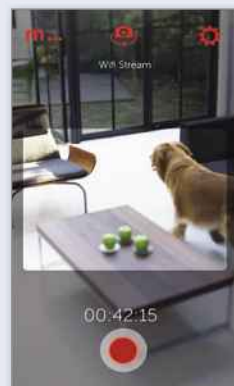
you add a variety of video effects (colour effects, styles, blurs, distortions and monochrome). You can also trim and merge your clips, and download or share the edited video file in HD.

Anything Free

Android: www.snipca.com/20024

iOS: www.snipca.com/20025

The latest update makes Anything just



about the best security app for your device. The free plan lets you use one device as a remote security camera for your home. You see notifications whenever motion is detected and can download motion alerts as video clips.

Cubes

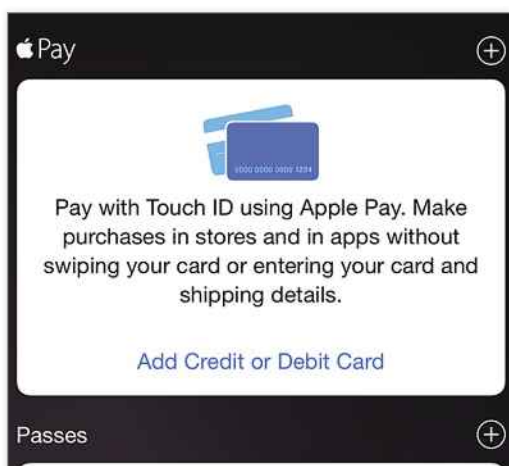
Free

iOS: www.snipca.com/20028

This brilliant app collects all the data stored within your various online accounts



(for example, Gmail, Yahoo, iCloud, Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox). It then organises your data into handy categories (photos, PDFs, videos, links and so on) for quick and easy access.



iOS

Use your iPhone to pay for items in shops



Apple Pay lets you use your iPhone instead of your credit or debit card to make secure

contactless payments in shops. Most UK banks now support this and it's accepted at over 250,000 locations nationwide. As with contactless cards, it is limited to purchases of £30 or less. You need an iPhone 6 or later because it uses Touch ID to make secure payments, which is only available on these latest models.

To set up Apple Pay, open the Wallet app on your iPhone, then tap 'Add Credit or Debit Card' (see screenshot above). At this point, you'll see a message if your bank doesn't support Apple Pay. If it does, tap Next. If you've already added your credit-card details to your device (for example, to buy content in the App Store), you'll need to confirm your three-digit security code on the back of your card. Otherwise, you'll be given the option to take a photo of your card and enter other information (such as its security number and expiry date). Next, agree to the terms and conditions.

The final step involves verifying your card details. You can do this via text message or by calling your bank. After completing the verification process, you'll see a message telling you your card is set up for Apple Pay.

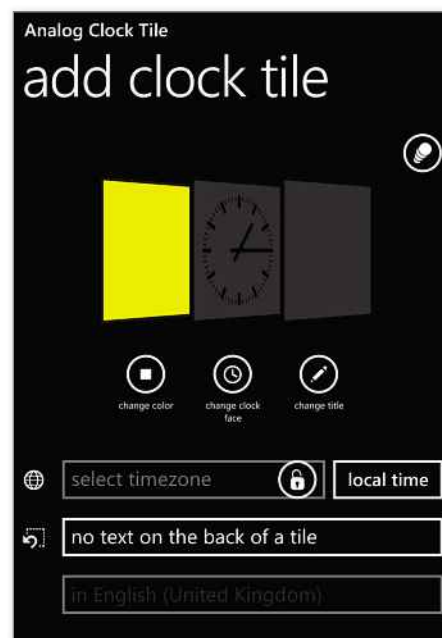
You'll now be able to make payments using your iPhone in any stores that accept contactless payment. To do this, hold the top of your iPhone to within an inch of the contactless card reader and activate Touch ID by gently tapping the Home button. Your iPhone will vibrate and you'll see a tick with a Done message on your screen, indicating the payment has been made.

WINDOWS PHONE

Add an analogue clock to your start screen



One way to make your Windows Phone screen more attractive is to add an 'analogue' clock – that is one with hands and a face. Do this by installing Analog Live Tile (www.snipca.com/20038), then tapping the 'Add new tile' option at the top left. You'll now see three tiles, which let you select the colour, watch-face style and title (see screenshot right). After selecting your watch face, tap 'do it!' to begin the free download. Tap the small circular icon at the top right to preview your tile. When you're happy, tap the pin icon at the bottom then position the clock where you want.



Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Charlie and Lola: I've Won!

£2.99 www.snipca.com/20029 (Android)

£2.99 www.snipca.com/20030 (iOS)

This new app based on the popular children's TV programme contains over 50 mini-games that will entertain and educate your toddler. Our favourite is 'Word and Number' in which they need to spell simple words and count numbers.



AGES 6-10

Lumino City

£1.49 www.snipca.com/20031 (iOS)

In this BAFTA-winning game, your child plays as Lumi – a little girl who needs to solve puzzles to progress through various levels. At the start, you receive a book containing all the clues you'll need. To access the book, however, you need to solve various number-based riddles.



AGES 11-16

Trials Frontier*

Free www.snipca.com/20032 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/20033 (iOS)

This is a modern-day version of the Nineties video game, Excite Bike. On your bike, you need to navigate your way through various obstacle courses, timing your acceleration, jumps and somersaults to perfection. Create a free account to compete with your kids.

*Contains in-app purchases



Make Windows Better

Clever tips for every version

WINDOWS 10

Add folders to your Start menu



Adding folders to your Start menu in Windows 10 requires a different method than in 7 and 8.

Press the Windows key, click Settings, then Personalization. Now click Start on the left, then scroll to the bottom and click the 'Choose which folders appear on Start' link. You'll see a list of the folders that you can add to your Start menu with sliders beneath them. Some sliders (such as File Explorer and Settings) are turned on by default. Turn on the sliders for the other folders that you want. These will now appear at the bottom left of your Start menu.

WINDOWS 7, 8

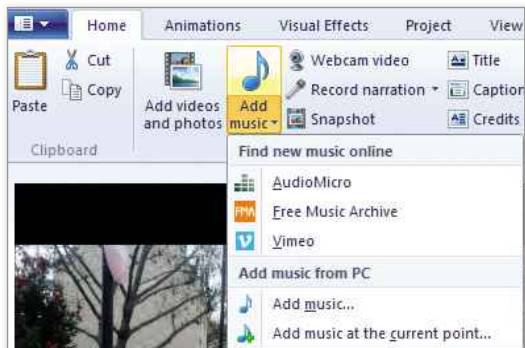
Download free (and legal) music for your videos



Windows Movie Maker has useful links to websites that let you

listen to, then download copyright-free music and sound effects. These are great for embellishing your videos. Search for Movie Maker on your PC (it comes as part of Windows Essentials). You can also install it as a standalone program from www.snipca.com/19893.

You can't search for these free music samples unless you first add the video you're editing to Movie Maker, so click 'Add videos and photos' at the top left, select the video from your PC, then click Open. Now click the 'Add music' dropdown menu. You'll see three websites in the 'Find new music online section' (see screenshot below). While all three websites have paid-for music, you can easily search for and listen to tracks and sound effects that are free. Click the download icon beside them to do that. To add the downloaded track to your video, click the 'Add music' dropdown menu again, select 'Add music', navigate to the Downloads folder, select your audio file and click Open.



WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

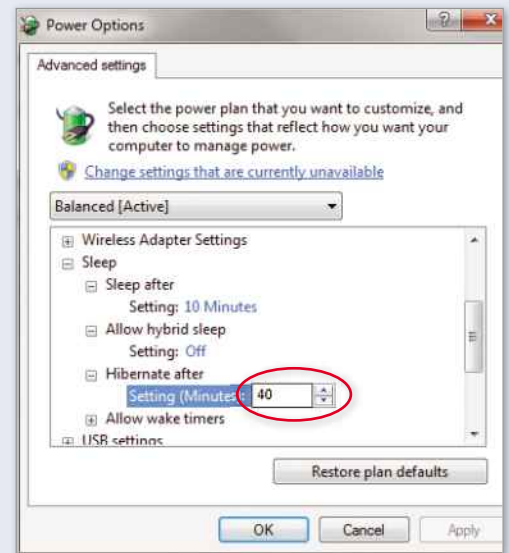
Add Hibernation to your power options



The power button lets you shut down

your PC, restart it or switch it to Sleep mode. You can add Hibernation mode as the fourth option to this list, but you first need to enable this mode. You should use Hibernation mode if you're planning to return to your laptop after a long time (a few hours) because it consumes very little battery compared with sleep mode.

To add Hibernation in Windows 7, press the Windows key, type **power options**, then press Enter. Now click the 'Change plan settings' link beside your selected power plan, then click the 'Change advanced power settings' link. In the pop-up window that opens, scroll down to the Sleep option and click the '+' icon to expand it. Now expand the 'Allow hybrid sleep' option and turn it off using the dropdown menu. Next, expand the 'Hibernate after' option, click Never, then type after how many minutes you want to set your PC to automatically switch to Hibernation mode (40 in the screenshot above). Finally, click Apply, then OK.



In Windows 8.1 or 10, press the Windows key, type **power options**, then press Enter. Next, click the 'Choose what the power buttons do' link at the top left, then click the 'Change settings that are currently unavailable' link at the top. At the bottom, you'll see the Hibernation option in the 'Shut-down settings' section. Tick it, then click Save changes.

In both cases, you'll see the Hibernation option added to your PC's power button.

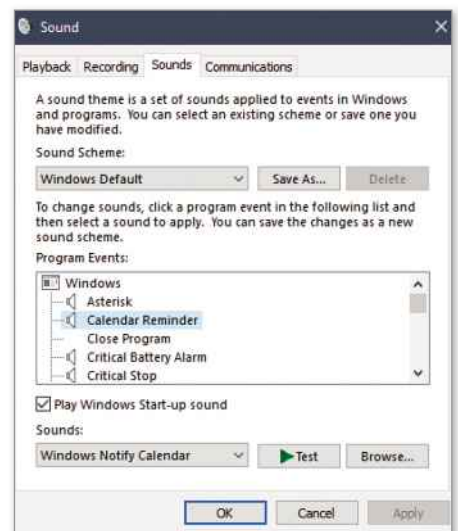
WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Change Windows' default system sounds



You're probably familiar with your default PC sounds, such as the ones you hear when you insert a device into your PC or when you receive a new email in Outlook. There's an easy way to change these

defaults if you want. Right-click the speaker icon in the notification area (bottom right of the desktop) and select Sounds. Now click a sound you want to change in the Program Events section and select a new sound from the Sounds dropdown menu below. Click Test to hear it. Alternatively, if you have your own sounds in the WAV file format, you can click Browse and navigate to these



instead. Once you've changed your sounds, click Save As, give your personalised 'scheme' a name, then click OK twice.

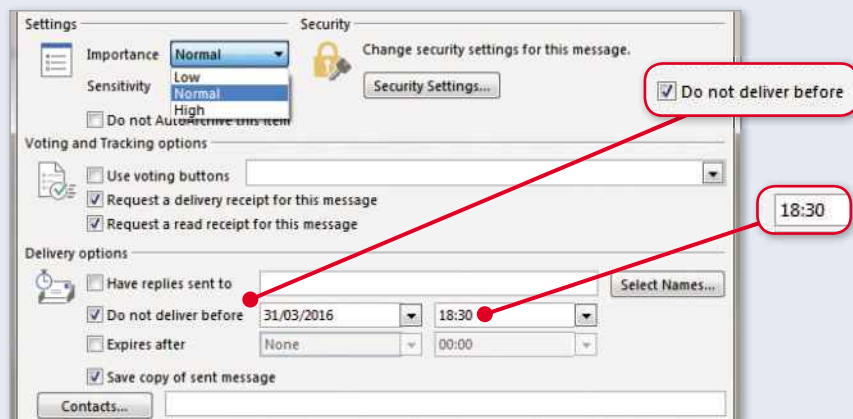
OUTLOOK

Schedule specific emails to send when you want

There's an easy way to defer sending specific emails to a particular date and time. This is especially useful if you're sending emails for special occasions (birthdays, anniversaries, and so on).

To do this, click New Email at the top left, then click the Options tab and click Delay Delivery at the top right. Now tick the 'Do not deliver before' field (see screenshot right). Click the date dropdown menu and set when you want it delivered, then click the time dropdown menu and set a delivery time.

You can send it as a message of High importance by clicking the Importance dropdown menu at the top left and selecting High. If you want to receive a report (email) when your message is



delivered and when the recipient opens it, then tick those boxes in the 'Voting and Tracking options' section. Now click Close, then write and send your email as you normally would. It'll get

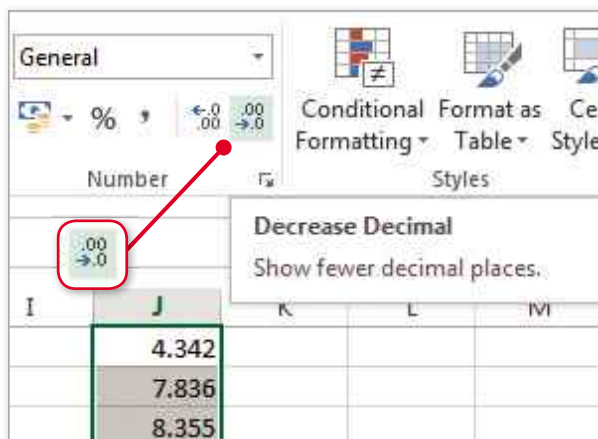
sent on the date and at the time you specified. If you ticked the boxes, you'll see a delivery report when the email is sent and another one when it's opened.

POWERPOINT

Customise your video player in PowerPoint

It's easy to add a video to your presentation, but you can also customise its appearance to make your slide look better. To add a video, click the Insert tab, then click the Video dropdown menu at the top right. You'll see two options: Online Videos and 'Videos on my PC'. The former lets you search for and add videos from YouTube. The latter lets you add a video stored on your PC.

By default, any videos you add take up the entire slide. To make it smaller, click and drag the dots at the video's edge. You can add different border styles to your video by selecting any of the options in the Video Styles section at the top. You can also convert your video into a shape by clicking the Video Shape dropdown menu and selecting an option from the list. Similarly, you can add a border colour and a border effect (such as a glow or reflection) by clicking the respective dropdown menu, then selecting the option you want.



EXCEL

Round off decimal numbers to their nearest value

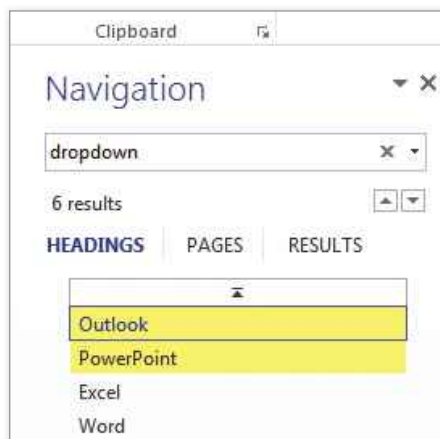
If your spreadsheet contains decimal numbers, there's an easy way to round these off to a smaller decimal unit or even to the nearest whole number, if you would prefer. To do this, simply highlight the decimal numbers that you want to round off. Now click the Decrease Decimal icon (see screenshot below). After clicking it, the numbers mentioned above will change to 4.34, 7.84 and 8.36 respectively. Click the same icon again to further decrease the decimal unit (the numbers will now change to 4.3, 7.8 and 8.4). Click it again and the numbers will turn to 4, 8, 8.

WORD

Search for a word or phrase within each section

If you have a long document containing many sections, then you should create headers for each one. After doing that, highlight each header in turn, and select a heading style (such as Heading 1) from the Home tab. Now click the View tab, then tick Navigation Pane (in the Show section). The panel on the left will display your headers. Click one to jump to that section. This is faster than scrolling through documents.

Click the search field at the top of the Navigation pane to search for a word or phrase that you want. All the sections that it appears in will get highlighted in yellow (see screenshot below). Click the section header to jump to it.





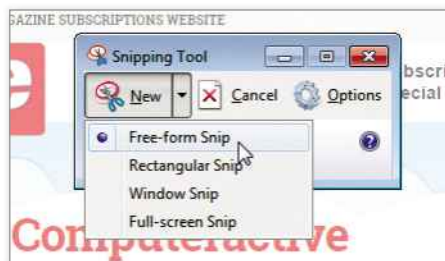
Screenshots

Capture the mouse cursor every time, grab a single window and save screenshots automatically

Capture anything with the Snipping Tool

Well, *nearly* anything. The Snipping Tool has been included with Windows Vista onwards. It will capture screenshots that seem beyond the reach of keyboard shortcuts – meaning specific parts of the screen, or a freehand area.

The Snipping Tool is hidden in different places but one way to launch it on any version of Windows is to press Windows key+R, type [snippingtool.exe](#) and press Enter. Click the New button before dragging a rectangle over the part of the screen you want to grab. But have you ever noticed the little down arrow next to this button? Click this instead to access four different ways to capture screens (see screenshot below).



Click the down arrow next to the New button in Snipping Tool for more ways to grab screenshots

Don't forget the Shift key

If pressing the Print Screen (or PrtScn, see photo right) button doesn't seem to work, the secret is that it's probably the key's secondary function. That means you need to hold down the Shift key before pressing Print Screen. On a laptop keyboard, you might instead need to hold down the Function (Fn) key before you tap Print Screen. To use your screenshot, just switch to another program and press Control (Ctrl+V) to paste.



Hold down the Shift key before pressing Print Screen (PrtScn) to capture screenshots

Snap a specific window

Want to focus on one program? Limit your screenshot to the current window by holding down the Alt key before tapping Print Screen. Remember to also press Shift or Function if your Print Screen key is the secondary function (see previous tip) – so Alt+Shift+Print Screen or Alt+Function+Print Screen.

Take smartphone and tablet screenshots

Capturing screenshots on Apple iPhones and iPads is easy: hold down the power button (at the top or side) and then press the physical home button. Timing isn't too important, so you might find it easier to hold down one or other button briefly

before tapping the other.

There's no single method on Android smartphones and tablets but the same power-button-plus-home-button trick works on some. On some Android devices, the home button might be a 'soft' button rather than a hardware one – meaning the round icon that's displayed at the foot of the screen. On others you might need to press the power button and volume-down button at the same time. Timing tends to be more important: aim for a simultaneous press of the two buttons.

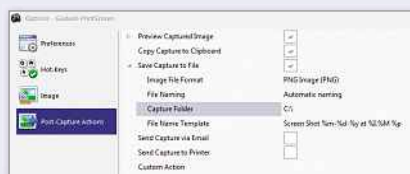
If you use a tablet running Windows 8.1/10 then a simultaneous tap of the power button and volume-down might do the job. Otherwise, while it's fiddly to use on a touchscreen, you can use the Snipping Tool – see the tip above.

Automatically save every screenshot

A great feature of Gadwin PrintScreen (see tip left) is the ability to save screenshots automatically. To set this up, right-click the PrintScreen icon in the notification area on the taskbar and choose Show Options, or hover your mouse cursor over the blue line on the left of the screen to open PrintScreen's **widget**, then click the cog icon. Select Post-Capture Actions on the left and then, in the right-hand pane, tick 'Save Capture to File'. Choose the image file format from the dropdown menu, then click the ellipsis (three dots) button alongside Capture Folder to choose the save location. Now just snap away, as per the previous tip.

Include the mouse cursor in any screenshot

Pressing Print Screen usually captures the mouse cursor in situ, but not always – and then only for the whole screen. The Alt+Print Screen shortcut ignores the mouse pointer, and the Snipping Tool can't manage it either. The secret is to use free software like Gadwin PrintScreen – download it from www.snipca.com/19789 (see screenshot right). It sets itself to be activated by a press of the Print Screen key, and its default is to include the mouse cursor. Just press Print Screen,



check the preview and then click the green tick (or press F2) to confirm. Your grab is now in the Windows Clipboard, so just press Ctrl+V to paste it elsewhere. PrintScreen does so much more though, so do read the tip on automatically saving screenshots, right.



Ghost emails

Mysterious messages from spooky senders are appearing on iPhones

What are they?

Emails dated 'January 1, 1970' being sent to iPad and iPhone users. They have perplexed thousands of people because they have no subject, sender or content, and can't be deleted. Many users are worried that they are being hacked – or haunted.

Which is it?

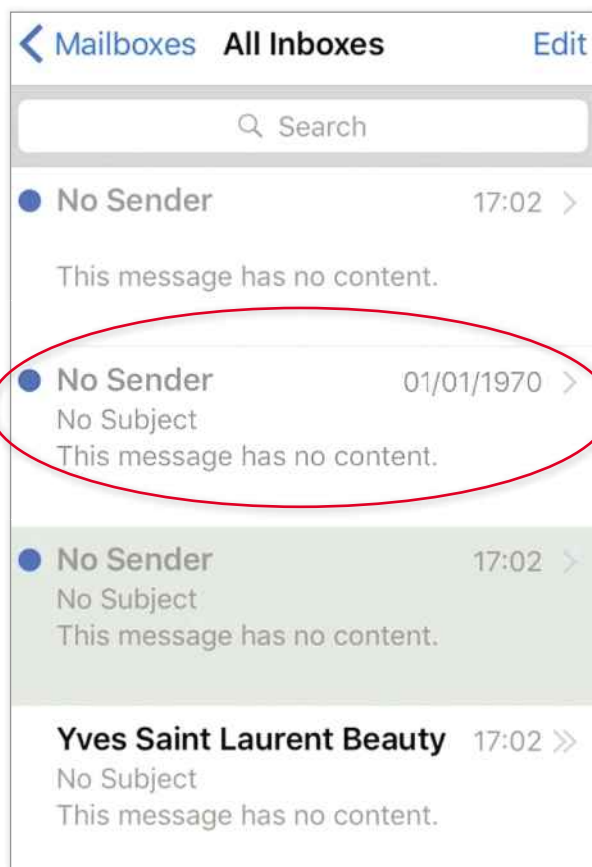
Neither. It's actually a flaw in iOS that occurs when users check their emails in a different timezone. The problem is that to tell the time iOS uses Unix, an operating system developed by Bell Labs in 1969. Unix counts how many seconds have elapsed since January 1, 1970 (about 1.45 billion). It's an effective way for computers to measure time, but because Unix works on Greenwich Mean Time it can get confused by a new timezone. It reacts by reverting to the default date, 46 years ago.

So it doesn't do any harm?

No, and it's easy to fix. Just close the app that received the mysterious email, then perform a **factory reset** by pressing the lock and home button at the same time.



Don't be tempted by this promise of a vintage Apple logo on your iPhone



But while the solution is simple, it's still a little unsettling to get an email dated 22 months before they were even invented.

So that would have been October 1971?

Correct. Coincidentally, the inventor of email died just a few days before reports of ghost emails emerged. Ray Tomlinson – who suffered a fatal heart attack on 5 March aged 74 – sent the world's first email while working on ARPANET, a precursor to the internet. Read more on his Wikipedia page: www.snipca.com/19946.

Wasn't there a more dangerous 'January 1, 1970' bug recently?

Yes, and it was exposed by a hoax that lots of people fell for. Instructions posted on forums appeared to demonstrate that by changing an

iPhone's date to 'January 1, 1970', you would unlock a hidden feature that replaces Apple's current logo with its old multi-coloured one (see image below left). But doing this actually 'bricks' the device, turning the screen black. You can't do anything to turn it back on.

Thankfully, after dragging its feet, Apple has released a fix that allows users to 'un-brick' their iPhones using iTunes. It will also prevent users from changing the date to any time before January 1, 2001. But this update – called iOS 9.3 – is still in **beta**, so it may take some time to arrive on your device.

Are there more Unix bugs to come?

Yes, a huge one – when Unix time actually comes to an end. It's a similar problem to the millennium bug, which triggered fears of global computer meltdown. As well as

obliterating software in PCs, phones and routers, it could break anti-lock braking systems in cars and GPS receivers in aeroplanes. It's serious stuff, though only **32bit** systems are at risk. Anything running **64bit** will survive because it can process more values, such as numbers.

So when does Unix time end?

At precisely 3:14:07 on the morning of 19 January 2038 (a Tuesday, in case you were wondering), when computers everywhere will reset to 13 December 1901. You can set your alarm clocks now. This 'Year 2038' problem is a well-known timebomb in the world of computing, and even has its own Wikipedia page (www.snipca.com/19947). Worryingly, there is no known solution. We have 7,965 days (and counting) to find one.

Windows 10 FIXED

Windows 10 is a great operating system, but it doesn't always work perfectly, as many of you have told us. Here our **Problems Solved** team answer some of the questions you've sent us

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Increase the scaling of your font, so words look less blurry
- Transfer your data to a new PC using Windows Installer
- Update your graphics card driver for Windows 10
- Stop Windows 10 updates repeatedly failing
- Make Windows Live Mail compatible with Windows 10, so it works properly

Our Problems Solved team have had to become Windows 10 experts very quickly. Since the operating system (OS) launched last July they've received thousands of emails from readers requesting fixes to problems. We answer many of these in the Problems Solved section of every issue (see page 64), but sometimes we get so inundated that the only sensible solution is to devote the Cover Feature to them.

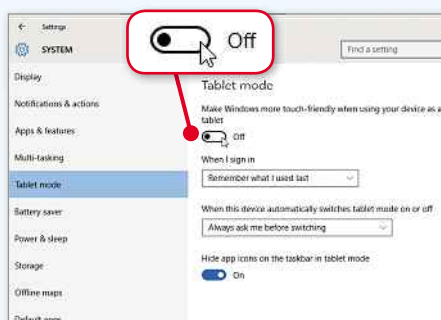
Here we tackle 13 problems that readers have emailed us about. We've chosen questions that are interesting in their own right, and that we think Microsoft is unlikely to provide quick fixes for. You may not suffer from the exact same problem as featured, but you might be able to apply some of the answers to other troublesome aspects of the operating system. As always, please email your questions to noproblem@computeractive.co.uk.

What's happened to my Windows 10 desktop?

Q I downloaded Windows 10 and I really like it, but for some reason, either my fault or some quirk, the new operating system thought I would prefer giant squares instead of the traditional desktop. These big squares are very easy to add to or remove, but I would like to know what happened, as well as how to go back to the traditional desktop.

Fred Abney

A You've inadvertently enabled Windows 10's Tablet mode which, as you can probably guess, is designed to make the operating



system easier to use on tablet devices. In Tablet mode, Windows 10 is all about app tiles and live tiles – those big squares you see.

It's surprisingly easy to activate Tablet

Turn off 'Tablet mode' to return to the normal desktop

mode with a wayward click (or tap) in Action Centre, but also just as easy to fix. First, click the Action Centre icon to the left of the clock on the taskbar – it's the little geometric speech bubble. Now just click 'Tablet mode' and your traditional desktop will return.

On the off-chance that you have Action Centre disabled, you'll have to use a different method. Click Start followed by Settings, then click System followed by Tablet and slide the 'Tablet mode' switch to Off.

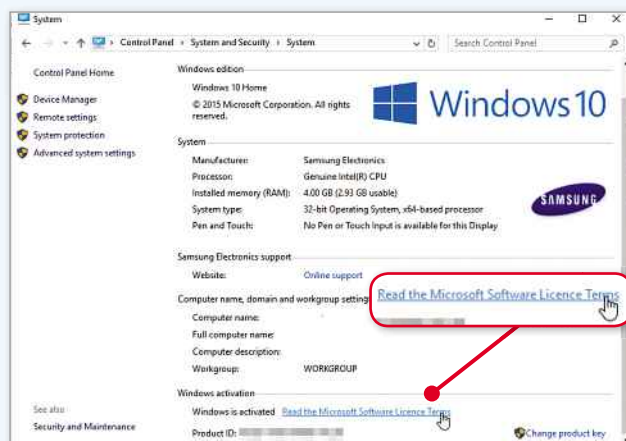
Can I take my copy of Windows 10 to a new PC?

Q I've been a *Computeractive* reader since the first issue. I'm now a silver surfer of 72 and feel I know my way around a computer pretty well. However, I'm wondering if I can transfer my copy of Windows 10 from my desktop PC to a laptop that's currently running Vista? The PC is nearly 10 years old, and I fear it may pack up any minute.

Jim Short

A Microsoft's licensing rules are incredibly convoluted. It boils down to how you came by Windows 10 or your original copy of Windows 7/8.1, and if you upgraded from one of those earlier editions.

First, if you bought Windows 10 new – either on a DVD and in a box, or as a paid-for download from Microsoft's website – then you have what the company calls a full-package product (FPP), which you're free to transfer to any PC you please, as long as you remove Windows 10 from the previous PC. The same will apply if you originally



Click 'Read the Microsoft Software Licence Terms' to see which licence you have

on a different PC. However, Microsoft will let you transfer an OEM licence to another user, as long as the transfer includes the original device (ie, you can sell your old PC

bought an FPP version of Windows 7/8/8.1 and upgraded that to Windows 10, as your older licence is subsumed into your new Windows 10 licence.

However, if Windows 7/8/8.1 was pre-installed on your PC, then you had an original-equipment manufacturer (OEM) licence, the terms of which were similarly subsumed into your new Windows 10 licence. That means you still have an OEM licence, and Microsoft's terms for these don't allow Windows to be transferred to

with Windows 10 in place).

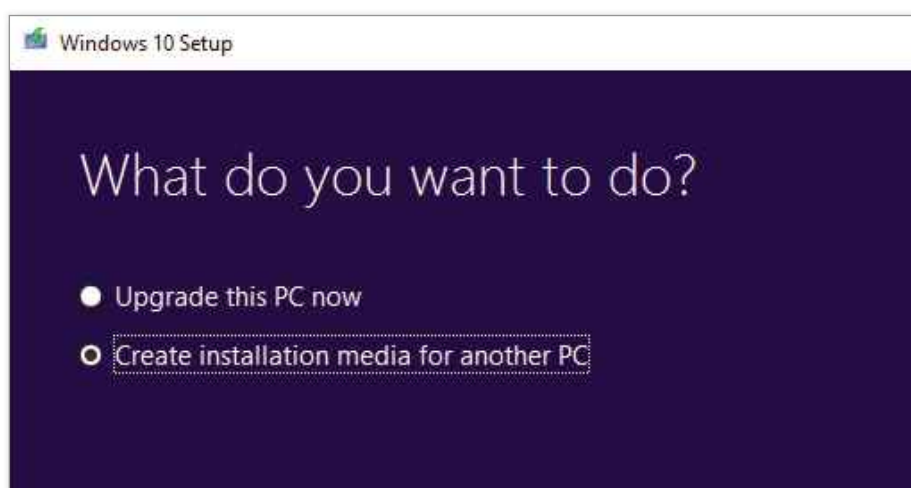
From your description of your PC, we'd take a guess that you upgraded a pre-installed copy of Windows 7 to Windows 10, so that means you've got an OEM licence that must stay with the machine. To check the terms of your licence, press Windows key+X, then click Control Panel, followed by 'System and Security' and then System. Now click 'Read the Microsoft Software Licence Terms' in the 'Windows activation' section.

How do I update my graphics card driver for Windows 10?

Q It seems Microsoft is going to eventually bully me into upgrading to Windows 10, despite me being happy with Windows 7. However, when I clicked to download, Microsoft's tool told me it wanted to make sure my computer was suitable – and it's not. It looks like Windows 10 doesn't support my Nvidia graphics card. I went to Nvidia's website and found the Windows 10 driver for my card, but Windows said it wasn't compatible. How does one get around this stalemate?

Mario Mager

A Your solution is to create a Windows 10 installation disc. This bypasses the compatibility check conducted by the Get Windows 10 (GWT) tool that pops up in Windows 7. If your PC doesn't have a DVD drive, then you should use a USB stick instead. Then, once Windows 10 is installed and running on basic graphics card drivers, you can download and install the necessary drivers from Nvidia's website.



Select this option to create a Windows 10 installation disc or USB stick

So, visit Microsoft's GWT page (www.snipca.com/19757) and download the media-creation tool. Double-click to launch the file, then accept the licence. Choose the 'Create installation media for another PC' button, click Next, check the language settings, then click Next. Choose 'USB flash drive' or 'ISO file' (DVD version), click Next then follow the prompts. If you're creating a DVD

version, right-click the ISO file and choose 'Burn disc image'. Then follow the prompts.

When the process is complete, take your DVD or USB stick and insert it into your Windows 7 PC. Press Windows key+E to open Windows Explorer, navigate to the relevant drive and double-click the setup.exe file to begin the Windows 10 installation. ►

How do I stop Windows Update getting stuck?

Q I have a desktop PC and laptop, both have Windows 10 installed and both suffer from the same problem – they get stuck when trying to download updates. My laptop gets stuck at 36 per cent into the update, and my desktop at 0 per cent. I tried using the Windows Troubleshooter (www.snipca.com/19897), but it was no help. Do you have any suggestions?

Bernie Jones

A Reported by many users, this problem is slightly different to the infamous ‘reboot loop’ that plagued people last year following a dodgy update. To fix it, you basically need to ‘flush out’ Windows Update. Restart your PC, right-click Start, then select Command Prompt (Admin). In the window that opens, type the following two commands at the prompt, pressing Enter and waiting for a confirmation message after each one:

```
net stop wuauserv
net stop bits
```



To stop Windows Update getting stuck, delete items from your Software Distribution folder

Next, click Start, File Explorer and navigate to the **C:\Windows\SoftwareDistribution** folder. Press Ctrl+A to select all the items, then right-click your selection and select Delete, then Yes. If you're unable to delete all the files in this folder, restart your PC, run the above commands, then try again. Once the folder is empty, go back to the Command Prompt

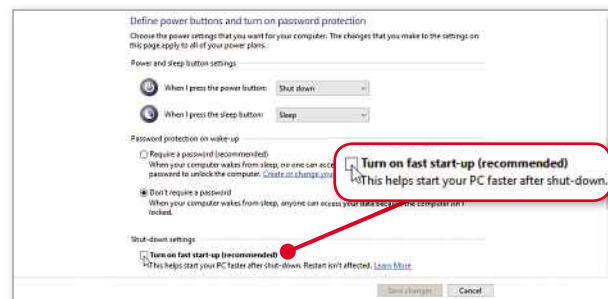
window and type the following two commands, pressing Enter and waiting for a confirmation message after each:

```
net start wuauserv
net start bits
```

Exit the Command Prompt and try Windows Update again.

How can I stop my computer hanging on shutdown?

Q I've been having problems with my Windows 10 PC ever since a recent update. The update itself installed okay, but now whenever I shut down my PC, the screen goes blank, but the PC remains switched on, whirring away for about a minute before finally turning itself off. I know it's a small thing, but before the update my computer used to shut off instantly and now it's really bothering me! Is there a fix for this?



Untick 'Turn on fast start-up' to stop your PC taking ages to shut down

the power buttons do'. Next, click 'Change settings that are currently unavailable' and scroll down to 'Shutdown settings'. Here, untick the 'Turn on fast start-up' option and click 'Save changes'.

This should solve the problem, but be advised that hanging shutdowns can also be caused by programs and processes not closing down properly, or by driver problems. If you're still having trouble, make sure all your programs, apps and hardware drivers are up to date.

A Hanging on shutdown is a problem caused by the Windows 10 November update. The fix for this is simple, but incredibly counter-intuitive. Click Start, type **power**, then click Power Options. In the window that opens, click 'Choose what

Wendy Barber

How do I reset Windows 10?

Q Whenever I had serious problems in Windows 7, I reset it. It was a drastic fix, but always worked. Can I do the same thing in Windows 10?

Helen McAndrew

A Yes, and it's simple to do. But remember that it will delete all your programs and third-party apps, so you'll need to reinstall them. You can reset Windows without deleting your personal files, but we thoroughly recommend backing up all your files and data first. When you're ready, click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', then Recovery. Click 'Get started' under 'Reset this PC', select the 'Keep my files' option when prompted, then follow the on-screen instructions. If the problem is so severe that your PC won't start, you should be greeted by a set of recovery options after two failed boot attempts. Click Troubleshoot, 'Reset this PC' then 'Keep my files' and follow the prompts.

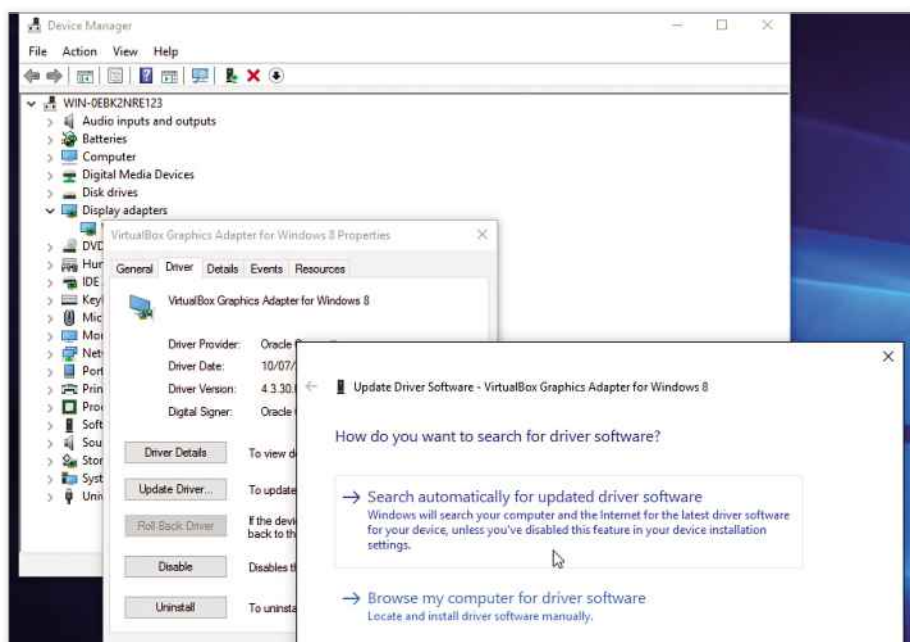
Why is my display stuck in the wrong resolution?

Q Since upgrading to Windows 10, my screen has been stuck at a resolution of 1024x768, when it should be 1280x768. The monitor is listed as 'Generic PnP' and will not allow me to change the resolution. I have tried every type of alteration, including reinstallation. Can you help an 80-year-old please?

Christopher C White

A This is almost certainly a classic display (graphics) driver problem. Normally, Windows 10 should download and install graphics driver updates automatically but, in some cases, it doesn't and you have to install them manually.

Right-click Start then select Device Manager. Click 'Display adapters', then double-click the adapter listed. In the box that opens, click the Driver tab, then click Update Driver, followed by 'Search automatically for updated driver software'. With any luck, Windows will find a suitable driver and install it. If not, make a note of your display adapter's make and model, then browse the manufacturer's



Fix display problems by clicking 'Search automatically for updated driver software' to find the latest drivers

website – usually AMD (www.amd.com), Intel (www.intel.co.uk) or Nvidia (www.nvidia.co.uk) – for the most recent driver. Download and install this yourself.

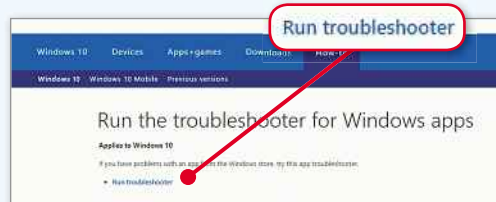
With the correct driver installed you should be able to select the right resolution by right-clicking the desktop and selecting 'Display settings', then 'Advanced display settings'.

How can I get my apps back?

Q I recently lost access to all my Windows 10 app tiles, being unable to open the Start menu pane (or should that be pain?) that contains them. I tried some suggestions I found online and was able to restore Start menu access, but a number of apps – in particular the Windows Store – are now completely unresponsive. I am 72 and losing what little hair I have left over this problem! Please help!

Jim Beston

A Many users are reporting problems with Windows 10 apps that disappear or won't run. There are different ways to try to fix them. First, head to www.snipca.com/19880 and click 'Run troubleshooter' (see screenshot). This will download a small automated tool for Windows. Double-click the tool to run it, then click Next to see if it can identify and fix any problems.



If your apps disappear, try running Microsoft's troubleshooter tool

If you still can't launch your apps or open the Windows Store, try running a second Microsoft troubleshooter at www.snipca.com/19881. You could also try resetting the Windows Store **cache**. Right-click Start, click Command Prompt (Admin), type **WSReset.exe** at the prompt and press Enter. Try the Store again.

If none of these solutions work, then you can try reinstalling all your apps from scratch. Click Start, type **powershell**, then right-click the Windows PowerShell listing and select 'Run as administrator'. At the prompt, type the following three commands, pressing Enter and waiting for each command to complete before typing the next. To prevent any typing mistakes, you can cut and paste them from our Pastebin page: www.snipca.com/19901.

```
Get-appxpackage -packageType
bundle |% {add-appxpackage
-register -disableddevelopmentmode
($_.installlocation + "\
appxmetadata\appxbundlemanifest.
xml")}
```

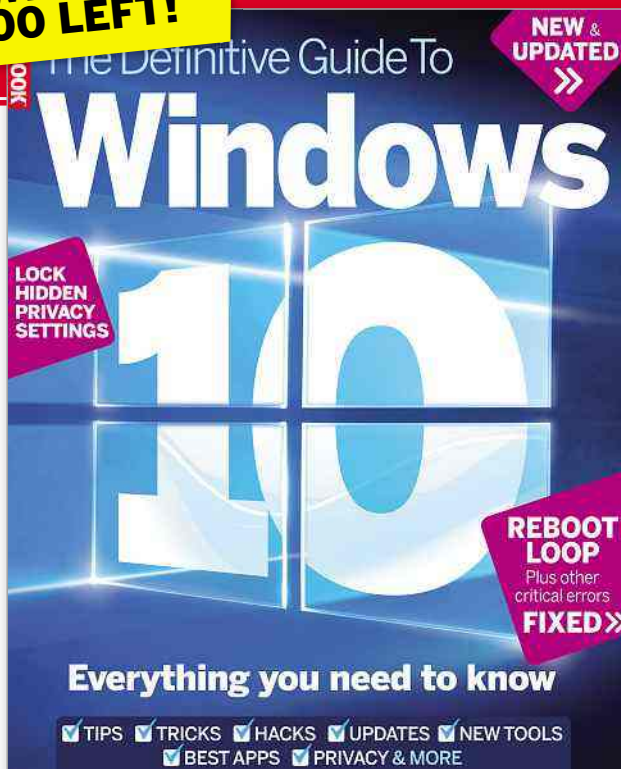
```
$bundlefamilies = (get-appxpackage
-packageType Bundle).
packagefamilyname
```

```
get-appxpackage -packageType main |?
{not ($bundlefamilies -contains $_.
packagefamilyname)} |% {add-
appxpackage -register
-disableddevelopmentmode ($_.
installlocation + "\appxmanifest.xml")}
```

Don't be alarmed if you see any red error messages. Restart your PC once this is complete and try your apps again. If they're still broken, try running the PowerShell commands once more. Should your apps still refuse to work at this point, then you may need to consider resetting Windows – see the 'How do I reset Windows 10?' question on page 52 for more on this.

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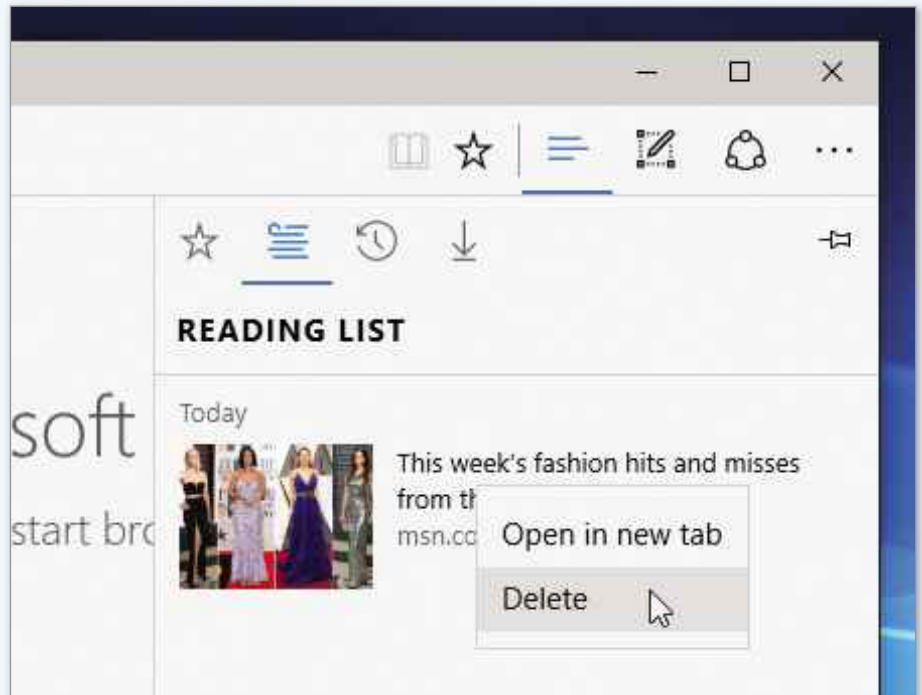
Why does Edge crash a few seconds after launch?

Q Since upgrading to Windows 10, I have been enjoying the new web browser Edge – or at least I was enjoying it until a recent update seemed to break it completely. Now, whenever I launch Edge, I'm only able to use it for a few seconds before the program window completely disappears. I've tried some of the suggestions found online, but none of them seem to cure the problem.

Andy Sanders

A A number of people have reported similar problems with Edge following the big November update. It's hard to diagnose exactly what's causing the browser to crash, but there are several things to try.

First, scan for any corrupt system files. Right-click Start and select Command Prompt (Admin). At the prompt, type `sfc /scannow` and let the process complete. If that doesn't fix it, try clearing your browsing history – though you'll need to be quick if Edge crashes soon after launching! Click the menu (three dots) button, then click Settings, 'Choose what to clear', tick all the options and click Clear. You could



If Edge keeps crashing, try deleting all the items in your Reading List

also try deleting all the items in your Reading List – in some cases this has cured crashing problems. Again, you'll need to be quick. Launch Edge, then click the Hub (three lines) button, followed by the Reading List icon – right-click

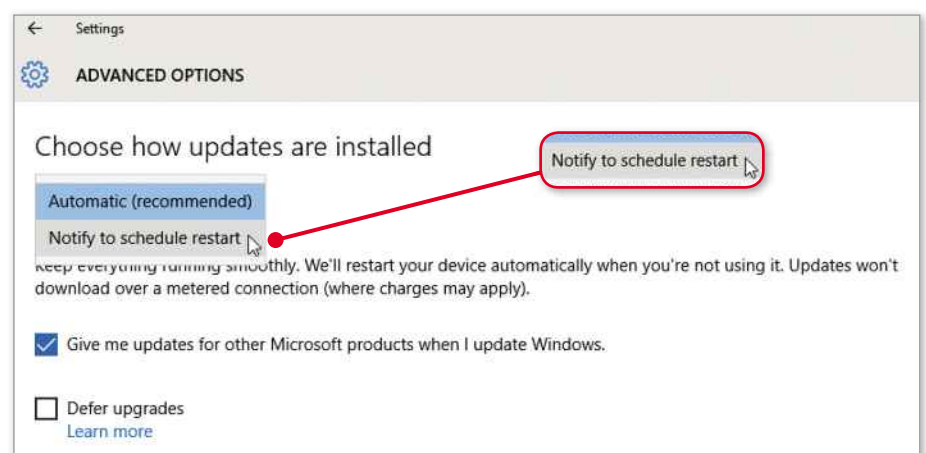
anything listed here and choose Delete (see screenshot above). If that still doesn't fix it, then you may have to consider switching to Chrome or Firefox, at least until Microsoft comes up with a solution.

How can I stop Windows Update interrupting my work?

Q I'm absolutely fuming because I've just been interrupted in the middle of an important bank transfer by Microsoft choosing to take over my computer and start a lengthy update! Not only that, but when it completed, I went back to browse the web only to be told that Firefox was no longer my default browser. Is there anything I can do to stop this type of thing happening again?

Derek Gant

A It's well known that Microsoft has made automatic updates obligatory in Windows 10. However, it is possible to make sure you're never interrupted by updates at inconvenient times. Click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', Windows Update, then click 'Advanced options'. Under 'Choose how updates are installed', select 'Notify to schedule restart' (see screenshot above right). With this setting,



Select 'Notify to schedule restart' to choose when you'd like an update to run

you'll be able to choose when you'd like to apply any new update that requires your PC to restart.

The second problem Derek describes – his default browser being changed after an update – is a widespread problem that occurred to many Windows 10

users after the big November update last year. Other default programs may have been changed, too and, annoyingly, the only way to fix it is to click Start, Settings, System, 'Default apps' and reselect your preferred tools under each category.

Can I get Windows Live Mail to work in Windows 10?

Q I hope to soon migrate to Windows 10 from Windows 7 Home Premium. I currently use Windows Live Mail to manage six different email accounts, but I've read online many cases of people having difficulty migrating Live Mail to Windows 10. Is there a fix for this or can you recommend a suitable alternative that I can use when I upgrade? I would like to stay with an email **client** rather than a webmail account.

Dave Barker **If Windows Live Mail causes problems, consider switching to FossaMail, which is based on Thunderbird**

A Windows Live Mail's compatibility under Windows 10 appears to be a bit hit and miss. We were able to download it (free as part of Windows Essentials, from www.snipca.com/19882) and run it without any problems on two separate Windows 10 PCs. But, as Dave says, many users are reporting that they're struggling to get it to work after upgrading.

One solution might be to back up all

your current messages and contacts in Live Mail before you upgrade to Windows 10 (see www.snipca.com/19883 for Microsoft's instructions). Then, if you discover that Live Mail doesn't work after upgrading, try uninstalling and reinstalling the program from scratch, then re-importing your backed up emails and contacts once you're done.

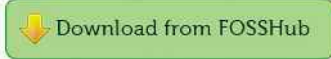
If Live Mail still doesn't work, then you could switch to an alternative email client and import your backed-up emails

and contacts into that. Windows 10's built in Mail app is simple, but may not have all the functions you're used to in Live Mail. A more appropriate replacement might be Thunderbird (www.snipca.com/19884), though it's no longer being developed by Mozilla. Instead, consider Fossamail (www.snipca.com/19355), which is based on Thunderbird. Click the green 'Download from FOSSHub' button (see screenshot above)

Current version: 25.2.0

Download:

Both the program (32-bit and 64-bit) and the lightning add-on are available from FOSSHub:



Support:

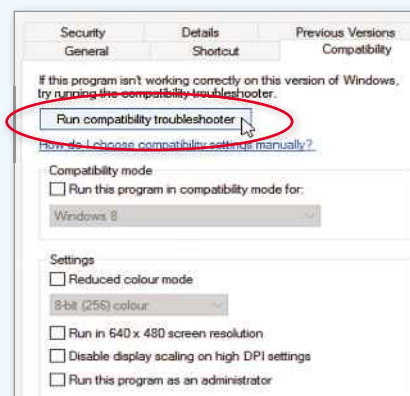
Support for FossaMail is provided by the Pale Moon community. You can discuss bugs, give feedback and ask for support on the [Pale Moon forum](#). You may also want to check out the [Mozilla help pages for Thunderbird](#) for general use questions, considering its functionality and feature set being extremely similar.

Can I get an old program to stop crashing?

Q I upgraded my PC to Windows 10, but the software I use for voice recordings (Creative MediaSource, www.snipca.com/19898) doesn't seem to be compatible with Windows 10 – it always crashes when I run it. Is there any way to fix this or can you recommend another similar program? I've tried Audacity but find it too complicated.

Peter Austin

A Creative MediaSource is a very old program that was once supplied with Sound Blaster audio cards. As with any old program, you could try running it in Windows 10's compatibility mode to fix your problems. Locate the program's **exe file** – it should be somewhere in C:\Program Files or C:\Program Files (x86) – right-click it and select Properties. On the Compatibility tab, try running the troubleshooter (see screenshot above) and experiment with the other settings available to see if you can get the program to run without crashing.



If old software keeps crashing, try running the 'compatibility troubleshooter'

Alternatively, if you only want to be able to make simple recordings, you could instead consider using the Voice Recorder app that comes with Windows 10. Click Start, type **voice** then click the Voice Recorder link that appears in the Start menu. The Voice Recorder app doesn't have many options, but it's certainly very easy to use.

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Why can't I transfer my data to my new Windows 10 PC?

Q I have tried to use Laplink PCmover (www.snipca.com/19896) to transfer files from my old Vista PC to my new Windows 10 laptop, as described in Issue 465. But when I try to install PCmover on the PC, I receive a message saying 'The Windows Installer Service could not be accessed'. I recently received a similar warning when I tried to install the driver for a new printer. Any idea what has gone wrong?

Iain Maclean

A Iain doesn't say whether he's experiencing the problem on his Windows Vista or his Windows 10 PC. But because problems with Windows Installer can affect all versions of Windows, here's what to try if you ever see a similar error message when attempting to install a program or driver. First, right-click Start, then select Command Prompt (Admin). In the prompt window that opens, type **net start msiserver** and press Enter (see screenshot below). You should see a message saying 'The Windows Installer service was started successfully'. Exit the Command Prompt and try installing the software again.

If it still won't work, open Command Prompt (Admin) again. If you're running a 64bit version of Windows, type the following four commands at the prompt, pressing Enter after each one:

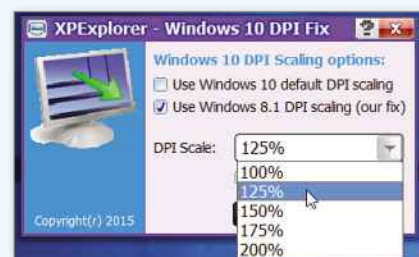
```
%windir%\system32\msiexec.exe /
unregister
%windir%\system32\msiexec.exe /
regserver
%windir%\syswow64\msiexec.exe /
unregister
%windir%\syswow64\msiexec.exe /
regserver
```

If you're running a 32bit version of Windows, type the following two commands at the prompt, pressing Enter after each one:

```
msiexec /unregister
msiexec /regserver
```

In both cases, reboot your PC, then try installing the software again. If you're still having problems, there's another, slightly more involved fix that requires creating and running a Registry key. See Method 1 on Microsoft's site (www.snipca.com/19870) for precise instructions.

Why do my fonts look blurry?



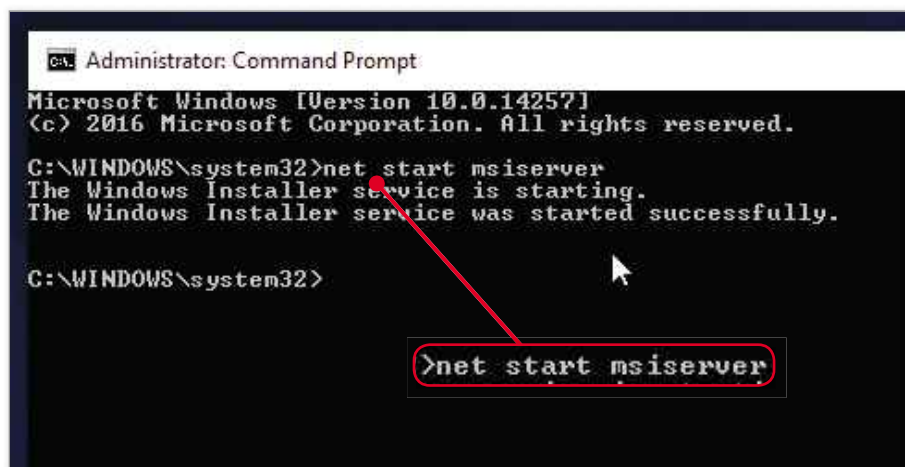
Use the free program XPEXplorer to change text size on screen

Q I upgraded to Windows 10, but I'm finding it hard to read some of the on-screen text, even though I've enlarged the fonts using the display settings. Is it me, or does the new OS make fonts look blurrier than they did in Windows 7?

Ken Mitchell

A Windows 10 uses a different scaling method than previous versions. The result is that, in some cases, if you increase the scale of your on-screen fonts to anything higher than 100 per cent, they can look blurrier. Reverting to 100 per cent scaling will fix this. Right-click the desktop and select 'Display settings'. Now click 'Advanced display settings', 'Advanced sizing of text and other items', then click 'set a custom scaling level'. Select 100% from the dropdown menu and click Apply, then click 'Sign out now' and log back in.

Text will be sharper, but smaller. If you need larger text, you can tweak Windows 10's Registry so it uses the same scaling technique that previous versions of Windows use. Rather than changing Registry settings yourself, use a free tool called XPEXplorer (www.snipca.com/19869). Download and run it, tick the 'Use Windows 8.1 DPI scaling (our fix)' option and select your DPI scale from the dropdown menu (see screenshot above). Click Apply then reboot.



To launch the Windows Installer service, type **net start msiserver** into Command Prompt

NEXT ISSUE On sale Wednesday 13 April

SOFTWARE SETTINGS YOU MUST CHANGE

Because your favourite programs leave you unsafe

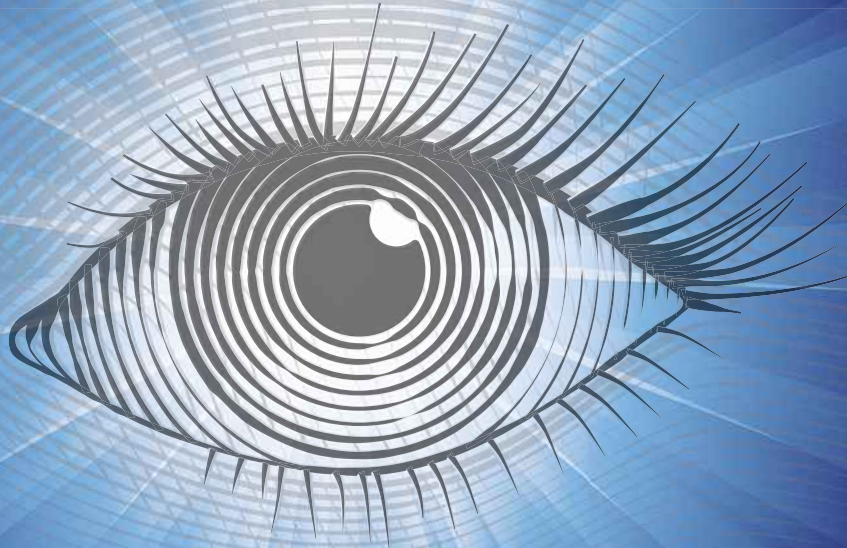
Plus • Can't Upgrade to Windows 10?
We identify and fix the problems

• Are Your Photos Safe?
Picasa closes - what you need to do



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13 Apr



PROTECT YOUR EYES FROM SCREEN GLARE

If you suffer from tired eyes after using your laptop or tablet, don't put up with the discomfort. Arren Sayers explains how to prevent eye strain

Ever notice how a few hours spent staring at your computer or tablet's screen leaves your eyes feeling sore and tired? That's because looking at the backlight behind a screen is like staring at a low-intensity light bulb for hours at a time.

What makes computer displays especially damaging is that they produce 'blue light' – a type of light that suppresses the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin. This not only makes it hard for us to nod off at night, but also leads to a disturbed night's sleep when we finally do.

Here we'll show you how to limit the effects of harmful light to keep you, and your eyes, in fine fettle.

Improve your room's lighting

It's a simple tip, but the first thing to do is to ensure that the environment where you use your computer is well lit. Comfortable ambient lighting will help to diffuse the damaging effects of the screen. Just make sure that any lamps you place are positioned so that they don't shine directly on to your monitor,

because this can cause reflections and glare that can be equally as harmful for your eyes. Avoid using fluorescent lighting too, as this may cause discomfort, particularly if you have sensitive eyes.

If reflections and glare on the screen is a problem that moving your lamp can't fix, you should consider buying a matte screen protector and fitting it to your laptop or tablet.

Tech Armor, for example, makes anti-glare covers for a wide range of tablets, from the Google Nexus 7 (www.snipca.com/19968) to the iPad Air (www.snipca.com/19969). While EPHY (www.snipca.com/19970) makes similar covers for laptops and PC monitors. Just be sure to check what size you need.

Optimise your screen settings

By default, most monitors are set at their maximum brightness. While this may be ideal for a brightly lit office or store

showroom, it's far too high for home environments. To give your eyes a break, set the brightness as low as is comfortable, while still maintaining sharp contrast. Monitors usually have physical controls that let you adjust their brightness.

The same applies to the screens on phones and tablets, although you adjust the brightness through the operating system, not the device's buttons. On Android, swipe down from the top of the screen to access brightness settings. On iPhones and iPads, which run iOS, swipe up from the bottom.

You can further reduce eyestrain by enlarging onscreen text so that it's easier to read. To do this on a PC, open Control Panel, select Appearance and Personalization, click Display then choose your preferred text size. You can also change the font size in many programs by holding Ctrl down while pressing the plus or minus symbols on your keyboard.

Upgrade your monitor

If your desktop PC came with a monitor it's unlikely to be a particularly good model. That's because PC stores routinely include poor monitors as a means to keep costs down.

A new monitor could be the perfect tonic to eye fatigue and we have no hesitation in recommending AOC's Q2778VQE monitor (www.snipca.com/19416) – our current Buy It award winner (£215, see review in Issue 468). If that's a little pricey, then take a look at the impressive AOC I2369VM monitor, which you can buy for £120 on Amazon.co.uk (www.snipca.com/19967). It has an anti-glare coating designed to keep reflections to a minimum.



AOC's Q2778VQE is our current recommended PC monitor

Best free eye-care software for Windows

F.lux

Any version of Windows (XP to 10)

<https://justgetflux.com>

F.lux adjusts the colour temperature of your screen to match the day and night cycle. Its cleverest trick is to reduce the amount of blue light your screen emits in the evening, replacing it with less harmful red light. To do this it subtly switches your screen to a soothing sunset colour, hopefully contributing to a good night's sleep.

You can access F.lux's settings by clicking the program's icon in your system tray. Here you can change how dark you want the sunset glaze to get and select how quickly it changes – either in just 20 seconds or over the course of an hour.

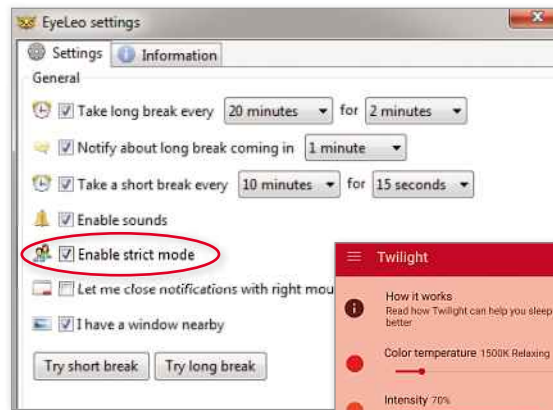
EyeLeo

Any version of Windows (XP to 10)

<http://eyeleo.com/download>

EyeLeo is a take-a-break reminder tool that prompts you to step away from your PC.

The program's "adorable" pop-up leopard will demonstrate eye exercises to try during your breaks, while an optional 'strict mode' will actually lock your PC (see screenshot above right), therefore ensuring that you actually do take that break rather than continuing with your work regardless. EyeLeo is simple to use, with a combination of tickboxes and dropdown menus



EyeLeo's 'strict mode' will lock your PC for a predetermined length of time

controlling the frequency and length of breaks.

PangoBright

Any version of Windows

(XP to 10)

www.pangobright.com/download.htm

PangoBright lets you reduce the brightness levels of your monitor beyond the minimum that your monitor's and Windows' settings usually allow.

Once it's installed, you'll see an icon for PangoBright in the taskbar (you might have to click on the expand arrow to see it). To adjust the levels, just click the PangoBright icon and then set the level at anything from 100% to 20% of the current brightness.

Another string to PangoBright's bow is the ability to control the brightness on different screens that are part of a multi-monitor setup. If you have multiple displays attached to your PC, click 'Affect Monitor 1' or 'Affect Monitor 2' to change the settings for each display. The downside is that PangoBright's installer needs to be downloaded through Download.com, so watch out for unwanted extras.

Best free eye-care apps for Android

Twilight

www.snipca.com/19817

Android (average review score 4.6/5)

Twilight applies a red tinge to your phone



PangoBright is free, but only available from Download.com – click the green download button to avoid any 'bonus' programs

or tablet's display to reduce the red light.

By accessing your location, the app will synchronise the colour temperature and brightness of your device's screen to match your local

day-night cycle, minimising blue light in the evenings. The settings and interface are simple and straightforward and there's an option to assign settings on up to two profiles, so that if you share your tablet with other members of your family you can set different levels based on personal taste.

Handily, Twilight also integrates with Android's Quick Settings menu, so you can pause it anytime with a quick swipe down

from the top of your screen.

Best free eye-care apps for iPad and iPhone

Apple currently doesn't allow on the App Store any apps that change screen colours, so apps that help fend off eye fatigue are currently in short supply for iPad and iPhone. In fact one such app, FlexBright, went on sale on the app store recently for all of a day until Apple removed it.

However, owners of Apple's tablets and phones will not have to suffer blue light forever. Apple will address the problem when iOS 9.3, the next version of its mobile operating system, is released (this may have happened by the time you read this).

If you have an iPhone 5s or newer, or an iPad Air or newer, the iOS update will add a new mode called Night Shift. Like Twilight for Android (see above), Night Shift tints the display to limit the amount of blue light produced by the screen.

When iOS 9.3 becomes available, update your phone or tablet in the usual way (tap Settings, then Software Update and follow the instructions) and then head to Display & Brightness within Settings.

You'll see Night Shift mode listed below Auto-Brightness. Tap it and you will be able to change the colour temperature so that it suits you. You can also choose the time frame that the colour shift takes place during the day and night. **ca**

READING ON A TABLET? CHOOSE AN E-READER INSTEAD

Though you can read ebooks on phones and tablets, e-readers are much kinder on the eyes.

The display of an e-reader is designed to mimic paper, even down to how it remains reflection-free in direct sunlight. Certain models, such as the Kobo Aura H2O, are even waterproof and ideal for using by the pool.

Most e-readers, with the notable exception of the basic Amazon Kindle, have a built-in backlight too, so you can use them at night without disturbing your other half by having to leave your bedside lamp on.

And don't worry, the dim, eye-friendly backlight of an e-reader should mean you'll still be able to get a good night's sleep.

ARE YOUR DEVICES DANGEROUS?

Modern tech seems plagued by product recalls, security vulnerabilities and other flaws. Jonathan Parkyn explains how to protect yourself from dodgy devices



When you buy a PC, laptop, tablet or any another device, the last thing you expect is for it to spy on you, expose you to security risks or catch fire. But a recent spate of horror stories in the news points to a worrying trend for faulty product lines and devices that are sold with built-in vulnerabilities, effectively turning your computer into a ticking time bomb.

But why is this happening? Which manufacturers are the worst offenders? And what can you do to protect yourself from potentially dangerous devices? Read on to find out.

Is your PC preloaded with malware?

Like many manufacturers, Lenovo pre-loads its PCs with all kinds of junk that you'll likely never use (see our cover feature in Issue 449 for advice on how to remove it). Sadly, there's nothing unusual about that, except that Lenovo went one step further than everyone else by bundling all of its laptops with malware.

According to Lenovo (www.snipca.com/19981), the malware in question – an advertising tool called Superfish Visual Search – was supposed to be “a technology that helps users find and discover products visually”. However, it was subsequently found that the software hijacked secure web connections and injected adverts into people's browsers. Not only that, but one security expert revealed that the software's **security-certificate password** could be easily cracked, exposing

Lenovo's customers to hackers and identity thieves (www.snipca.com/19982).

Lenovo was no doubt hoping to generate income from advertising revenue when it added Superfish to its PCs. But the tool, which has now been identified as malware by more than 20 leading antivirus services (www.snipca.com/19983), was removed in February 2015 and the company apologised (www.snipca.com/19986).

If you bought a Lenovo laptop prior to the scandal, you can check whether Superfish is lurking somewhere on your computer by visiting the online checker at lastpass.com/superfish (see screenshot below). Annoyingly, if the online tool finds Superfish on your system, you can't just uninstall it. Instead, you need to download and run Lenovo's special removal tool (www.snipca.com/19985), then visit the online checker again to test that the removal has been successful.

Was your PC sold with security flaws?

Unbelievably, Lenovo came under fire again more recently when it was revealed that the Lenovo Solution Center – more

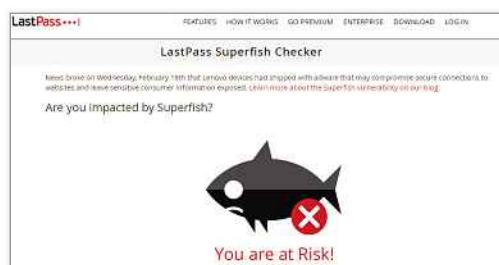
unnecessary software that comes pre-installed on the company's PCs – contained vulnerabilities that could hand control of your PC to hackers.

The flaw, uncovered last December by a hacker called Slipstream, potentially lets criminals remotely hijack your computer via an infected web page. To fix the Solution Center vulnerability, follow Lenovo's instructions at www.snipca.com/19990.

Lenovo isn't the only PC manufacturer guilty of shipping devices that are full of security holes. In December, Toshiba admitted that security weaknesses in its pre-loaded Toshiba Service Station software “could allow unauthorised access to the affected PC's system registry”. See www.snipca.com/19998 for more on the problem, including links to an updated, malware-free version of Service Station.

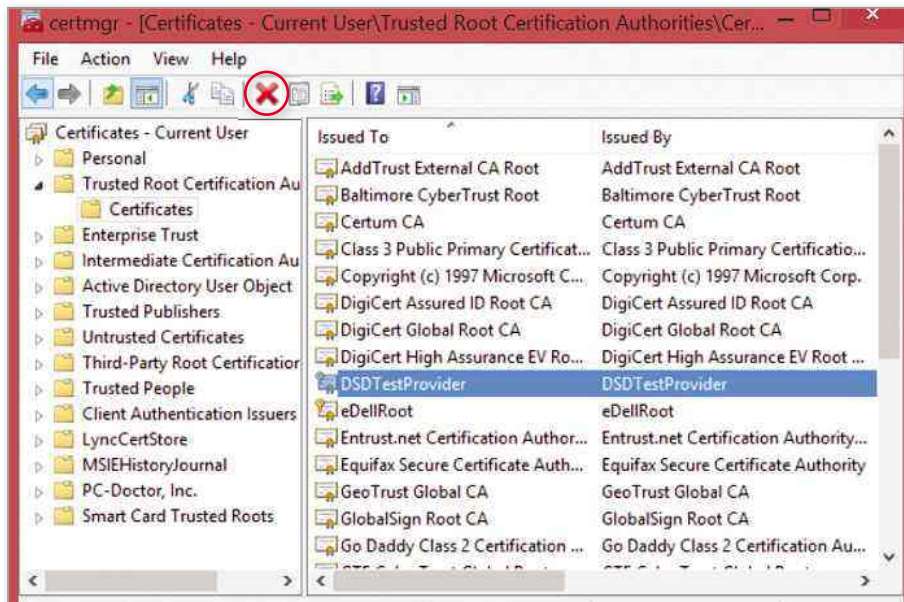
In November last year, Dell PCs were found to have vulnerabilities similar to that of Superfish. In an official statement (www.snipca.com/20002), Dell said that the ‘eDellRoot’ tool was added to make it easier for its support staff to identify the PC model they were trying to fix. But it also allowed hackers to steal the personal data of Dell's customers over public Wi-Fi connections.

No sooner was this vulnerability revealed, than a second threat was exposed on Dell PCs in the shape of the ‘DSDTestProvider’ certificate – part of a bundled program called Dell System Detect. If you own a Dell PC, you can check for, and fix, both vulnerabilities via Dell's support page (www.snipca.com/20006, see screenshot above right).



Own a Lenovo PC? Use this online checker to see if it's infected by Superfish

Are your devices dangerous?



Remove DSDTestProvider and eDellRoot using Dell's instructions, then click the red cross icon

COULD AN UPDATE KILL YOUR DEVICE?

Updates are supposed to improve devices and make them safer – not break them altogether. Try telling that to Microsoft. The company, having recently made updates compulsory for Windows 10 devices, managed to release one that caused its own laptops – the Microsoft Surface Pro 3 and 4 – to freeze completely. Luckily, the update in question (Build 14279) wasn't intended for general consumption; it was rolled out to Windows Insiders for testing in early March. In a subsequent blog post (www.snipca.com/19980), Microsoft acknowledged the flaw and provided a fix for affected devices (holding down the power button to force a **hard reboot**).

Are your accessories unsafe?

Even if your PC is unaffected by manufacturer failings, you may own other devices that make you vulnerable. Earlier this year, for example, wireless mice and keyboards from a wide range of manufacturers (including Microsoft, Logitech and, yet again, Lenovo) were found to be susceptible to being hacked from up to 100 metres away. The flaw, discovered in USB sticks used to connect wireless peripherals to PCs, effectively hands criminals control of your PC.

Known as 'mousejacking', it lets hackers remotely access your PC in order to steal data or install malware on your PC remotely. For more on this problem, go to www.mousejack.com and for a list of vulnerable devices, visit www.snipca.com/20007.

Elsewhere, a recent research project uncovered potential security flaws in more than a dozen current Netgear and D-Link routers (www.snipca.com/20008). Netgear has promised to issue a **firmware** update to fix affected models. If you own one of the devices listed, contact the relevant manufacturer immediately.

As with all security vulnerabilities,

keeping your devices updated is the best protection. However, updates can sometimes introduce fresh defects of their own, as Microsoft's recent Windows 10 gaffe proves (see box above right).

Could your device catch fire?

Being put at risk by a potential security flaw is one thing. But a device that puts your entire family in danger because it is a fire hazard is altogether more worrying. Sadly, this continues to be a widespread problem – and it isn't just cheap knock-off products that you need to worry about.

Microsoft, Apple, Amazon and many other leading tech companies have all been forced to issue product recalls for defective devices since the turn of the year, often requiring users to replace a charging unit. For instance, the power adapters provided with Amazon's somewhat ironically named Fire 7-inch tablets – including a Kids Edition model – were recently found "in rare cases" to cause electrical shocks. Check www.snipca.com/20010 to find out if your adapter is affected and what you should do if it is.

Similarly, Microsoft is urging owners of certain Surface Pro 1, 2 and 3 devices to apply for a free replacement power cord (www.snipca.com/20011), after reports that the power unit originally supplied with the tablets is prone to overheating and could be a fire risk.

How to stay safe

These are just a couple of recent examples in what is a rising trend. One of the biggest problems is knowing when a device you own has been identified as



Visit Electrical Safety First's website to find out about product recalls

faulty. According to UK charity Electrical Safety First, the average success rate of an electrical product recall is just 10-20 per cent, meaning that there could be millions of defective devices in use in homes all over the country.

The best way to protect yourself is to register any device you buy with the manufacturer – most products provide info on how to do this in the supplied literature. It's usually a question of visiting the manufacturer's website and entering your details. This can seem like a hassle, but it means that if your device is ever found to be dangerous or defective, the company will be able to contact you.

You can also visit Electrical Safety First's product checker (www.snipca.com/20014) and the Chartered Trading Standards website (www.snipca.com/20015) to read about the latest recall campaigns. And, if you suspect a device or its power adapter is faulty, then let the manufacturer know right away. **ca**



Amazon Fire plugs with the number FABK7B have been recalled after causing electric shocks

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Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

Why do my emails disappear?

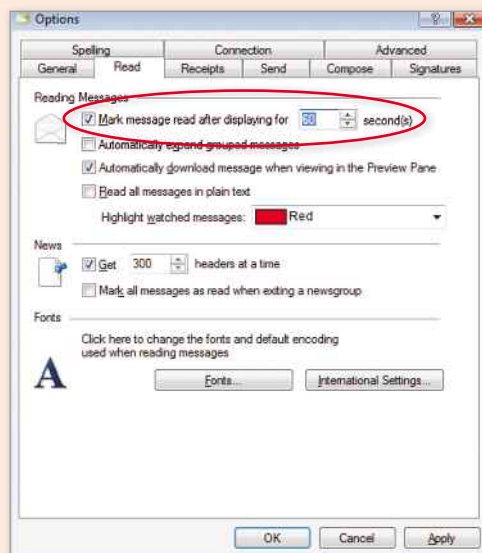
Q I am using Windows 10 with Windows Live Mail (WLM) and was initially happy with the setup. I also have Kaspersky Internet Security installed. Recently I have been having problems with email. When I start WLM I have become aware of new messages that appear briefly in the inbox, then disappear – and I cannot retrieve them! At 77 years old and suffering the onset of dementia, I'd appreciate some help.

Ken Nicholas

A There are a couple of things going on here. First, you have an option enabled in WLM that automatically marks messages as read, just a few seconds after they're selected. Second, you are using a WLM view that hides messages that have been marked as read.

These two things in concert will result in exactly the problem you describe. The sequence of events is this: a new message arrives, it's selected and then soon disappears from view because it's been marked as 'read'. In fact, because of the way your WLM is set up, you wouldn't even need to manually select a new message when it arrives – it would be selected automatically, for reasons we'll explain.

Hiding read messages can obviously be a useful feature, but only when configured correctly. For now, let's just disable the feature. First, if you have multiple email accounts set up, select the relevant Inbox folder. Now select the View tab and click the 'New view' button. You'll notice that either 'Hide read messages' or 'Hide read or ignored messages' is ticked – this is the cause of the problem. Select 'Show all messages' and then click Apply View. Now select the 'All of my folders' button and click OK.



Ensure 'Mark message read after displaying for...' is set to give plenty of time to view messages

Next, extend the duration before WLM marks a selected message as read, or just disable the feature entirely. Click the down arrow at the top left to open the WLM menu, then point to Options and click Mail. Select the Read tab and clear the tick from the 'Mark messages after displaying for' box. Your problem of disappearing messages is now solved.

However, we reckon that at some point in the past you've intentionally enabled WLM's message-hiding feature to keep a clean inbox. The trouble is that if the 'Mark messages after displaying for' duration is too brief, and there are no other messages in the inbox, then each new arrival will be automatically selected and then hidden. We think that's exactly what's been happening.

So, if you wish to re-enable the 'Hide read messages' feature – that you have time to read messages that you select or, as explained, are automatically selected through circumstance – return to the Read tab on the Options box, re-tick the 'Mark message after displaying for' box and then type a longer duration.

Have cheap cartridges ruined my printer?

Q My Canon Pixma iP3300 will no longer start, let alone print. On my Windows 7 PC, a small screen appears with the following message: 'Operator error. Press the printer's Resume button. If this doesn't clear the error, cancel printing and turn the printer off and then on again!' I've tried that but it's still stuck. I use cheap compatible cartridges – could these be the cause?

Robert Vallance

A We wouldn't rule out the cheap cartridges as a possible cause, because printer companies do spend a lot of money precisely formulating ink for their devices.

However, your specific printer model is getting on for 10 years old, so its most likely that the printer head has just become bunged up. First, try the printer's built-in cleaning mechanism: switch it on, then hold down the Resume/Cancel button until the power light flashes green and then just sit back.

If that doesn't work, you could try physically cleaning the print head. This certainly wouldn't be recommended by Canon, but it's a decade-old printer that's otherwise useless to you, so you have little to lose. Remove the cartridges, lift the print head's locking lever and gently pull it free. Repeatedly dip the head in a bowl of warm water, until the run-off fluid runs clear. Pat it off with a lint-free cloth and then leave it to dry thoroughly for at least 24 hours. Reseat it, then try printing.



If the printer head is bunged up, the built-in cleaning facility might be able to clear it

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How do I stream to my TV over Wi-Fi?

Q I treated myself to a new Sony smart TV. It has all the bells and whistles, and apps and so on. However, what I really want to be able to do is play videos from my Nexus tablet and smartphone on the big screen. In fact, I'd like to view other stuff too, such as family photos, which are stored on my laptop. I'm sure with all this fancy technology there must be a way to do this without wires, or am I deluded? I have a wireless router and all my devices connect through it, so can I do this?

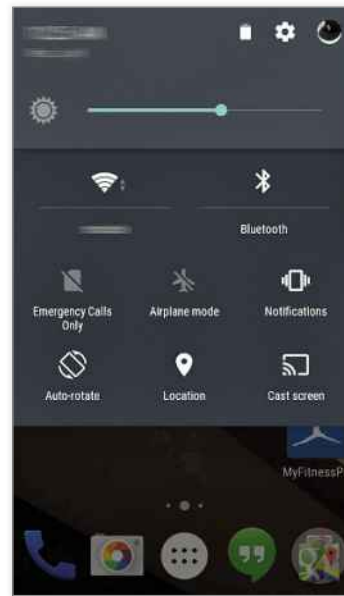
Donald Hansen

A You shouldn't need to resort to wires. You didn't tell us the exact model of your Sony TV but if it's a recent model with a good specification then it'll have built-in Wi-Fi and a feature that Sony calls 'Screen mirroring'. This is just Sony's brand name for a technology 'standard' called Miracast.

We put single quotes around 'standard' because while Miracast is supposed to be a standard that enables simple wireless

streaming between any two compatible devices, the reality is a bit of a mess. This is not least because pretty much every company uses a different brand name for it – such as Sony's 'Screen mirroring'.

However, in your case it should work fine. On your Android devices, launch Settings, tap Display then scroll down to the bottom and tap Cast or 'Cast Screen' (for the benefit of other readers, different Android smartphones and tablets might use a different name for this feature). Assuming your TV is switched on and connected to your Wi-Fi network, its name should appear and be labelled as 'Wireless display'. Tap its name then, on your TV, use the remote control to accept

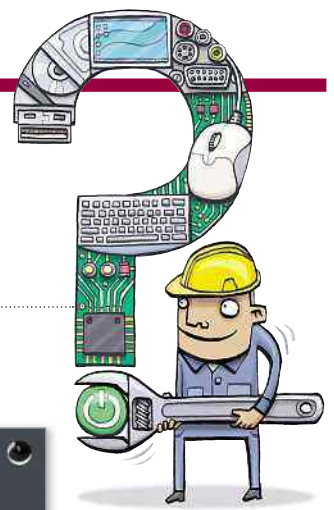


Tap 'Cast Screen' on Android devices to mirror the content on a television

the connection. If all goes well, your phone or tablet screen should now be 'mirrored' on the TV. Now play the content you want.

If your laptop has Windows 8.1 or 10, you should be able to do much the same. Click Start (or Windows key+C in Windows 8.1)

followed by Settings, then click Devices followed by Connected Devices. You should see your Sony TV listed on the right. Click 'Add a device', then click your TV's name and wait – the screen should be mirrored within a few seconds.

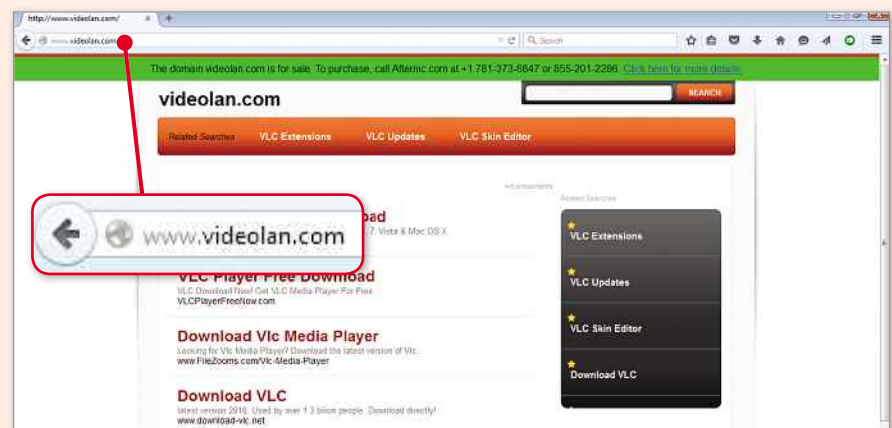


Has the VLC website been hacked?

Q I wanted to download the VLC Media Player, which you've recommended several times in your pages. However, when I tried I received a message saying that the site had been blocked for my security. I would like to download the program but am loath to do so in the light of this warning. What's going on here?

Bill Wren

A Most likely you've typed in the wrong website address. VLC is available from www.videolan.org, which is the website address we always publish. However, because so many websites end in .com, it's easy to type www.videolan.com instead – and that domain has got nothing to do with VideoLAN, the non-profit



The incorrect domain for VideoLAN contains fake download links for VLC

organisation that develops VLC.

In fact, www.videolan.com is categorised by some security software as a malicious page because it contains loads of fake download links for VLC. From your screenshot we know that the message you see is from your Bullguard security software, so either it's warning you before you reach www.videolan.com or it's popping up after you've clicked one

of the fake download links. This means Bullguard is doing its job.

You've probably guessed the solution by now – ensure you're visiting www.videolan.org – not www.videolan.com (or other incorrect variants, such as www.videolan.co.uk). To help you, we've created a short URL to the legitimate VLC Media Player download page: www.snipca.com/19788.

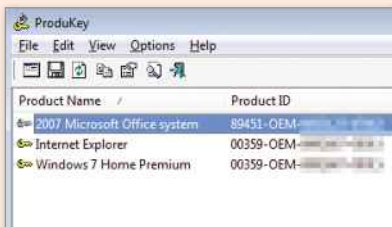
Problems Solved

Why won't LicenseCrawler find all my keys?

Q I tried LicenseCrawler 1.52, as featured in Issue 465. The program found most (though not all) of my Microsoft product keys, but it didn't find keys for some of my other paid-for programs. Oddly, it did find serial numbers for many of my free programs. What can I do to correct this apparent glitch?

J Reynolds

A This isn't really a glitch so much as a limitation of this particular tool's programming. LicenseCrawler is one of many key-finder tools that exist and, while they all use similar methods to hunt through the Registry in search of serial numbers, their differing techniques have varying levels of success.



NirSoft's ProduKey is very good at revealing your Microsoft codes

So, where LicenseCrawler failed to find keys for some programs, other tools might succeed. NirSoft's ProduKey, for example, is good at rooting out Microsoft serial numbers, so use it to complete your list of Microsoft keys – it's a free download from www.snipca.com/19721. If you download the portable version (the ZIP file) it doesn't require installation: just double-click produkey.exe to reveal your Microsoft codes.

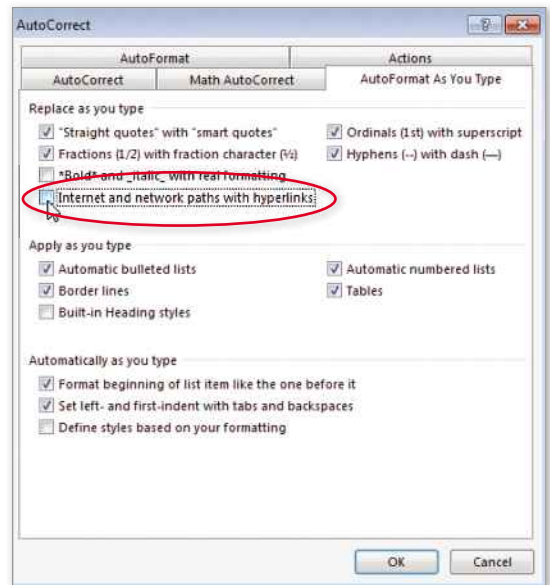
However, ProduKey doesn't find keys for non-Microsoft programs. LicenseCrawler does but, as you found, it's not perfect.

Belarc Advisor (www.snipca.com/19722) is another tool to try. Again, it doesn't require installation: just double-click BelarcAdvisor.exe and it'll get to work.

How do I remove all hyperlinks?

Q I'm writing a very long document that contains loads of web addresses. Every time I type one, Microsoft Word changes it into a clickable link. That didn't bother me at first but now when editing the document or just scrolling through, I sometimes accidentally click one of these links. This wastes time as I'm then switched to the browser. I don't actually need these links to be clickable, because the document is intended for a printed booklet. How do I stop Word changing every web address into a link? And is there a way to clear all the links it's already made?

Christina Bush



Untick this option to prevent Word from turning web addresses into links

A Assuming you're using a version of Word 2010 or later, start by clicking File followed by Options. Now click Proofing on the left, followed by the AutoCorrect Options button, on the right. In the AutoCorrect box, select the AutoFormat As You Type tab then clear the tick from 'Internet and network paths

with hyperlinks'. Click OK twice.

To clear all existing hyperlinks from a document, first press Control (Ctrl)+A to select the entire document. Now press Ctrl+Shift+F9 to remove the hyperlinks. Don't worry: the actual web address will remain – it's just the ability to click them that's removed.

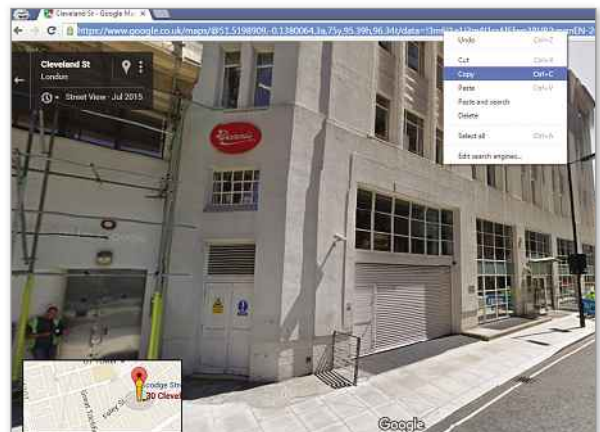
How do I link to Street View locations?

Q I've been using Google Street View (www.google.co.uk/maps) to explore neighbourhoods of my youth, capturing screenshots to share and reminisce with old friends. One pal asked me how I got to a particular location that I found on Street View. We got him there in the end by me giving instructions over the phone, but it made me think that there must be an easier way than having someone type in a street name before telling them numerous times to click this or that direction arrow. Any ideas?

Charles Pennell

A Yes – there's an easy way to do this. The Street View website creates a unique website address (or URL) for every view. So, all you've got to do is copy the URL from

the address bar at the top and then paste that into an email. Click in the bar, press Control (Ctrl)+A to select the whole URL then Ctrl+C to copy. Now switch to an email window and press Ctrl+V to paste the address. When the recipient clicks the link, they'll be taken to the exact same spot, with the exact same view.



For easy reference, a unique website address is generated for every view in Google Street View

How do I stop Chrome opening unwanted tabs?

Q I browse with Google Chrome. For no apparent reason, new tabs start to open behind the page I'm viewing. Often by the time I have realised that this is happening, two or three tabs might've opened. This causes my netbook, which only runs Windows 7 Starter edition, to slow down. Do you have a fix for this please?

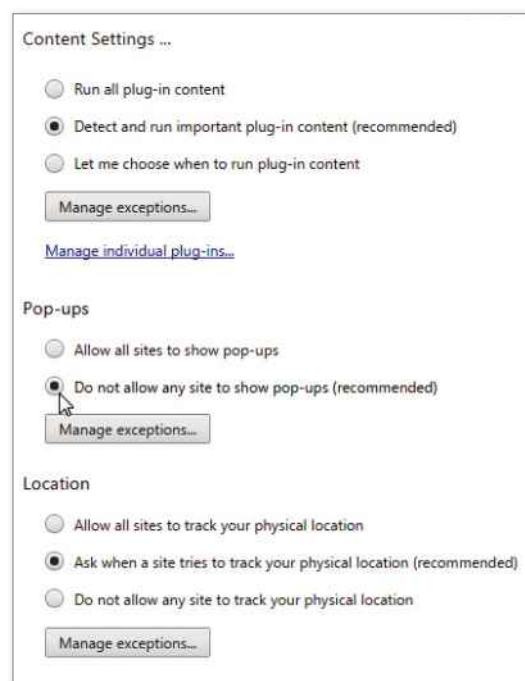
Richard Evans

A This sounds like nothing more sinister than pop-up adverts, or 'pop-under' – adverts that open in background tabs. Websites use numerous techniques to create these annoyances, and there are just as many ways of halting them. First, click Chrome's menu button

(three horizontal lines, top right) and choose Settings. Scroll down to find and click 'Show advanced settings'. Scroll to Privacy and click Content Settings. In the Cookies section, tick 'Block third-party cookies and data'. Then, in the Pop-ups section, select the 'Do not allow any site to show pop-ups (recommended)' button.

That should do the job. If not, return to Content Settings, then select the 'Do not allow any sites to run JavaScript' button. Note the 'Manage exceptions' button here: you might need to use this later to allow certain sites to run their JavaScript content.

Alternatively, or as well, install a free pop-up-blocking extension, such as Adblock Plus – get it from www.snipca.com/19787.



Put a halt to annoying pop-ups and block third-party cookies in Chrome's Privacy settings

Where is the push option for Yahoo email in Windows Mail?

Q I am using the Windows Mail app with Windows 10. In the Manage Accounts screen for both my Gmail and Hotmail accounts I can choose 'as items arrive' under 'Download new content', which I would expect to be the default anyway. As a result, messages are pushed to my Mail app as they're received by Google's and Microsoft's servers. However, even though I have successfully added my Yahoo account, the 'as items arrive' option is not available. The best frequency is 'every 15 minutes' (though 'manually' is also an option). Do you know why this is? Is there a way around it?

Chris Fussey

A Yes, although the answer is deeply arcane. It involves the way that certain email systems work, and how certain email programs handle them. All the services you use support the modern IMAP protocol, which among much else



Click 'Get the app' in the Windows Store to download the Yahoo Mail app

allows the server to 'push' emails to the recipient just as soon as they arrive. However, Yahoo's implementation of this isn't quite the same as that used by Microsoft and Google.

It's possible that Microsoft might update the Windows Mail app at some point, but the 'problem' is really Yahoo's, because it uses a less popular method to push email via IMAP.

One potential solution would be to

download the Yahoo Mail app from the Windows Store. Either search the store for it or visit www.snipca.com/19734 and click 'Get the app'. Click Free to install and then Open to launch it. Setup is as simple as logging in with your existing Yahoo credentials. Push email is the default option – so your emails will appear the moment they arrive at the Yahoo server.

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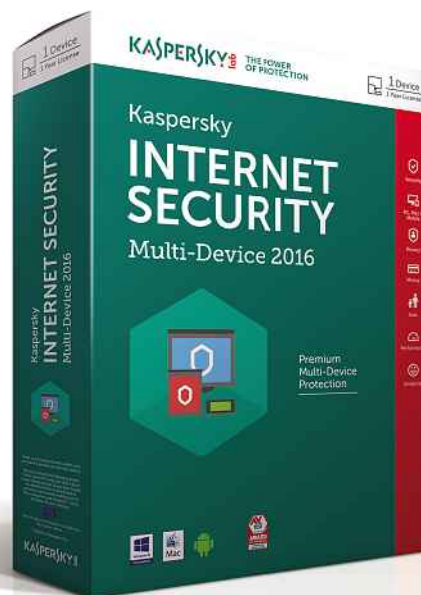
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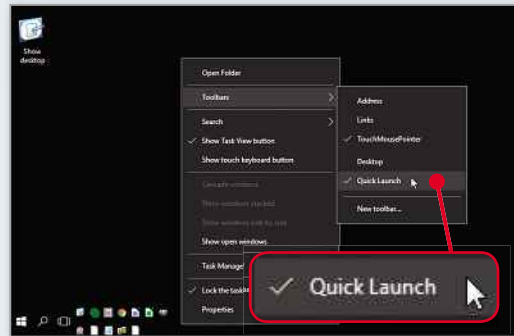
Whatever happened to... Quick Launch

Q Okay, here's my entry for 'Whatever happened to...'. Windows XP's taskbar had a little tray of launch icons, just to the right of the Start button. This disappeared in Windows 7, so I learned to live without it. I note that it's not in Windows 10, either. Why did Microsoft get rid of it?

Michael Sullivan

A The feature you're talking about is Quick Launch. Microsoft never said why it was removed, but it's likely to have been in response to the way the revamped taskbar worked. In Windows 7 onwards, program icons could be 'pinned' to the taskbar, whether or not they were running – arguably negating the need for the dedicated dock that was Quick Launch.

It's pretty straightforward to bring it back, if you want. First, right-click on a blank part of the taskbar, point to Toolbars and then click 'New



It is possible to bring back Quick Launch just as you once used it

toolbar'. In the folder path bar at the top, type `%UserProfile%\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Quick Launch`, press Enter then click Select Folder.

That puts Quick Launch back on the taskbar, but not as you remember it – it's a button that leads to a menu. To make it how it used to be, right-click a blank part of the taskbar, then click to untick 'Lock the taskbar'. Now right-click the Quick Launch button, point to View and click to

tick Small Icons. Right-click Quick Launch again and click to clear the tick from 'Show title'. Then, right-click a third time, on a blank part of Quick Launch, and click to untick Show Text.

Next, hover the mouse cursor over the little divider line to the left of Quick Launch, then click and drag it all the way to the left of the taskbar. Finally, right-click a blank part of the taskbar and click to once more tick

'Lock the taskbar'.

To add new items to Quick Launch, just create a shortcut to it and then drag this into the Quick Launch dock. To create a shortcut, press Windows key+E to launch File Explorer (or Windows Explorer), then right-click a program or file and choose 'Create shortcut'.

 Want to know what happened to your favourite program, website or technology? Email noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

Should I leave my Google password in my will?

Q I'm revising my will and I'm wondering whether I should leave my digital passwords in my will? In particular, I'd want to pass on my Google password to my wife or children because, for better or worse, I've entrusted virtually my entire digital life to Google – emails in Gmail, Picasa photos, YouTube videos and so on. I'm worried that writing my password down will make it instantly insecure (my

solicitor would be able to see it, for starters!). What's your advice?

Paul Maynard

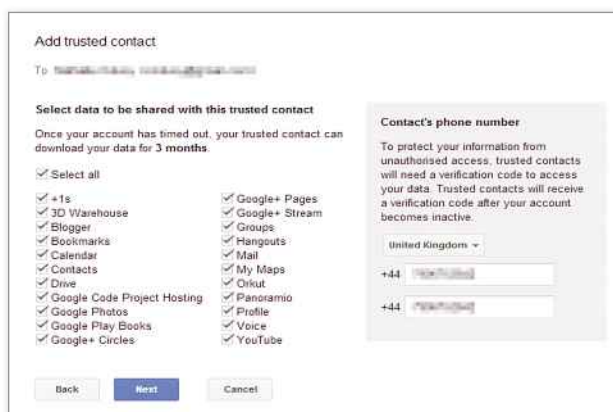
A You need to discuss the privacy of your will with your solicitor, because we're not experts on such matters. Certainly, entrusting passwords to these legacy documents is an increasingly common practice.

However, because you're primarily concerned about passing on your Google data you could make use of a hidden feature called Inactive Account Manager. It's not easy to find by navigating Google itself, so go straight there by visiting www.snipca.com/19780.

There are lots of sections to explore but the key ones are 'Timeout period' and 'Notify Contacts and Share Data'. In 'Timeout period', choose a period

before Google will release your data to another. For example, if you choose '3 months' and then, if you fail to log in for three months (meaning you've probably passed on), the Inactive Account Manager will take the actions you specify next.

Now, in the 'Notify Contacts and Share Data' section, click 'Add trusted contact', type in their email address, tick 'Share my data with this contact' and click Next. Now tick the boxes for the data you wish to share with them, add their phone number and click Next. Type a message to explain to them what it's all about then click Save. Repeat for other next of kin.



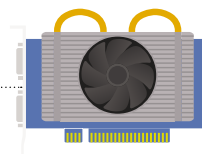
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ON SALE
13 April

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Graphics cards and graphics

Stop errors and blue-screen crashes, fix a faulty cooling fan and diagnose low resolutions

Graphics freeze or blue-screen crashes

Symptoms like these point to a hardware problem. It could be that your card's graphics processing unit (GPU) is getting too hot – games in particular make big demands on the chip, so it'll heat up quicker. The cause is often built-up dust and grime on the card's integrated fan and/or cooling fins (or 'heat sink'). Remove the mains power, then open your PC. Cleaning is easier with the card extracted, so remove the retaining screw from the PC's backplate and then slowly tease it free from its expansion slot. Use a can of compressed air to expel dust from the card's cooling fan (and from your PC's other fans), then use cotton buds to get into the nooks and crannies of the heat sink. If you're really confident, you could dismantle the card to conduct a full deep-clean – see the next tip for help with that.

Cooling fan won't turn

Assuming you've followed the previous tip to give everything a thorough clean, then a non-spinning fan could be down to a burnt-out motor. You might be able to replace it. The exact method varies but generally involves removing a few screws, pulling the faulty cooler free and then detaching the power cable to separate the fan from the card itself. Replacement is more or less the same process in reverse. Depending on the setup you might need to apply some thermal paste between the

fan and the GPU to ensure reliable contact for efficient heat transfer and dissipation. Incidentally, if the fan isn't faulty but cleaning doesn't resolve crashes or freezes, then following this procedure to replace worn-out thermal paste could be all that's needed.

Card won't show a picture

A blank screen has lots of possible causes. First, check the connecting cables between your PC and the monitor because the plugs work loose over time – so push both ends home firmly and tighten the retaining thumb-screws. Next, check that you haven't accidentally hit the Source or Input button on your display, as this will switch between your graphics card's digital and analogue outputs (or vice versa). Similarly, if it's a new PC, check that you're using the correct graphics card output. Some computers have both integrated graphics and a separate graphics card, with only the latter configured to work. Each of these 'cards' has its own set of connections – so you need to hook your display up to the right one.

Resolution is really low

If Windows launches at a really low resolution then it might have reverted to a generic graphics card driver. This could be because your graphics card's drivers have been corrupted, or because it can't determine the correct resolution for your setup. To diagnose, right-click a blank part of the Windows desktop and choose 'Screen resolution' (Windows 7/8.1) or 'Display settings' followed by 'Advanced display settings' (Windows 10). Now open the

Stop overheating by using compressed air to expel dust from the cooling fan



Updating or rolling back your graphics card's drivers can fix error messages and odd behaviour

Resolution dropdown menu to see if there's a higher-resolution option. If the one you want is there, choose it and then click Apply. If all looks okay, choose 'Keep changes'; if not, click Revert and try other settings. If your screen goes blank, wait 15 seconds and Windows will revert automatically. Now follow the last tip.

Error messages and unusual symptoms

Graphics card error messages and inevitable behaviours are often down to out-of-date or corrupted graphics drivers. The best bet is to grab the latest software from the manufacturer's website. To find out your graphics card's make and model, press Windows key+R, type `devmgmt.msc` and press Enter. Double-click 'Display adapters'. You can also attempt to update the drivers from here, or roll back to previous drivers if the latest ones are causing problems. Right-click the adapter name and choose Properties. Now select the Driver tab, click Update Driver or Roll Back Driver and then follow the prompts (see screenshot above).



A burnt-out motor could stop your graphics card's fan from spinning, but replacements are available



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In the next issue of our sister title Web User...

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Jargon Buster

32bit A measure of how much information a computer can process at once. Most older computers are 32bit.

64bit A technology that processes information in larger chunks. Most modern computers are 64bit.

802.11ac A standard for wireless networks that allows for higher transfer speeds than 802.11n.

Beta A version of software that's being tested. They are often released so problems can be fixed.

Biometric Using measurable personal characteristics, such as fingerprints, for identification.

Cache A temporary space for storing information.

Client A computer program used to access and manage a user's email.

Command prompt A black window into which you can type instructions. To see it, click Start, Run, type `cmd` and press Enter.

Cookie A small text file stored on your computer by a website.

DPI Dots per inch. A measure of printed image quality, or the size an object will be shown on screen.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

DVI Digital Visual Interface. A common type of display connector that can carry a digital signal.

EXE file A program file designed to run in Windows. Named after the file extension .exe.

Factory reset A software restore of an electronic device to its original state.

False positive When an antivirus program wrongly detects a malware infection.

Firmware Basic software stored on a device – such as a hard drive or router – to control its operation.

Flash memory A type of memory that can retain information without a power source.

FTP File Transfer Protocol. A system for transferring files between computers.

Graphics card A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

HTML Hypertext Markup Language. The language used to write most web pages.

IMAP Internet Message Access Protocol. A method for email that lets the user manage messages stored on a remote server.

Mirror site A website that contains the same downloadable software as others, so it's available from more than one place.

Open source Software that can be modified by anyone, rather than just by its developers.

Phishing A form of internet fraud that tries to trick you into revealing personal details.

Pre-render When an image is generated not by the device playing it, but by the one it was recorded on.

PUP Potentially Unwanted Program. A program that may not be desired, despite the user consenting to it being downloaded.

SD card Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

Security certificate password The proof that a company owns the encryption of a program.

Single-pass overwrite A simple but effective way of permanently deleting files.

sRGB A standard RGB colour space for use on monitors, printers and the internet. RGB stands for red, green and blue.

SSD Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than conventional hard drives.

System restore point The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

Temporary internet files Website files stored on your hard drive to make web pages load faster.

Travel The distance the keys of a keyboard have to be pressed before the keystroke is recognised.

USB 3.0 An even faster version of the USB standard used to connect devices to a computer.

USB Type-C A new connector that's reversible, letting you plug it in upside down.

VA Vertical Alignment. A form of LCDs in which the liquid crystals naturally align vertically between the panes of glass.

VGA Video Graphics Array. A standard socket for connecting a monitor to a computer.

WAV file An audio file used for recording music and other sounds to disc. Because they are uncompressed, WAV files can be very large. The file format was developed by Microsoft and IBM.

Web apps Programs that aren't stored on your computer, but on a web server instead and run through your web browser.

Widget A small program that runs on the Windows Desktop.

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ISO file An image file that contains all the data from a CD or DVD.

JavaScript A 20-year-old programming language developers use to make web pages interactive.

LCD Liquid-Crystal Display. The technology used to create almost all flat displays, such as televisions.

MicroSD A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size.

Microsoft Knowledge Base (P8) Microsoft's archive of articles available to the public, some containing information on security updates. Each one has a reference code beginning KB.

PVR Personal video recorder. Also known as DVR (digital video recorder). These set-top boxes let you pause and record digital TV.

Quad core A PC that has four processors on a single chip, which allows it to operate faster than standard (single-core) computers.

RAM Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on. The more memory your PC has, the more things it can process simultaneously.

Scaling How operating systems display text from different programs to make it readable on screen.



The Final Straw



KEN RIGSBY is
Computeractive's Mr Angry

This issue Ken Rigsby wants to share the pain of...

Logging in

Before I allow you to read this issue's column, I'm going to ask you to do something. It's not a big effort, really: I just need you to tell me your Final Straw username and password. If you can't remember them, don't worry – just tap the 'I've forgotten my username or password' link at the foot of this page. It won't do anything, obviously, because this is a printed magazine. So what on earth were you thinking? But humour me and I'll pop a password reminder in the post. Just keep refreshing your doormat until it arrives.



“
Why should I
have to hand over
my personal details
just to discover
where the Find
button is in the latest
edition of Word?
”

Don't have a Final Straw login yet? Well, it takes just a few moments to register online. In return for telling me who you are, you'll receive lots of great benefits. This will include a barrage of junk mail masquerading as news updates delivered straight to your inbox. I promise not to sell your details on to any shyster who waves their wallet at me, unless you fail to clear the tick from the tiny box that I'm hoping you won't notice. So, go to www.finalstrawreaderbenefits.com and sign up, now! When the confirmation

email arrives, click the link it contains and then return to this page to proceed with your imaginary login.

Next, just choose five security questions, and provide unique answers for each. Memorable ones, remember. Oh, I'll also need your phone number, and an alternative email address – just for backup purposes (honest).

Incidentally, you did remember to include at least one capital letter, number and special symbol in your password, didn't you? If not, go back and fix that now. Also, remember that your password needs to be at least 10 characters in length, and must not include any common words or names. Still with me?

Finally, just decipher the indecipherable Captcha image to prove that you're a human, and therefore have value to my advertising clients. If you can't work out what it says, click the speaker icon and I'll stick a sock in my mouth before reading it aloud while doing an impression of a drunk Martian. Figured it out now? Great.

Congratulations – your registration was successful, and you're now logged into The Final Straw. Just click here to sign up for my newsletter, then it's on with the column!

Sorry it took so long for you to access this issue's column, but all of the above is

how it feels when I hunt online for the solution to a simple tech conundrum. I'm only mortal so I sometimes get lost looking for a particular feature in Microsoft Office's awful 'ribbon' controls. I then turn to Google for a quick hint. And I get lots of them. But when I click through for the answer, I'm often met with a demand to log in. Even some Microsoft support pages now do this. Haven't got a Microsoft account? You're not invited to its support party, and you're not coming in.

This happens frequently enough to be a serious daily annoyance. I can live with Microsoft's login demands because I permit my browser to store passwords for key sites. But what of all the other sites where I just want to click through to turn up a tech titbit? Why should I have to hand over my personal details just to discover where the Find button is in the latest edition of Word? And after jumping through the endless security hoops, there's no guarantee that I'll find what I need.

So there you have it. I forced you to log in to read this column and all for nothing. Disappointing, huh? And remember that, like all those websites that demand your details, I now know who you are.

✉ Do you agree with Ken?
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